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DIPLOMATIC DOCUMENTS RELATING TO ITALY'S AGGRESSION AGAINST GREECE

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THE GREEK WHITE BOOK

ISSUED IN COOPERATION WITH THE GREEK OFFICE OF INFORMATION

American Council on Public Affairs
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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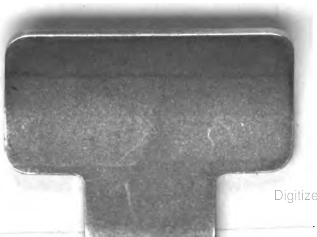

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PREFACE

By EMMANUEL TSOUDEROS, *Prime Minister of Greece.*

THE Greek White Book is a clear and sober account of facts, given without commentary, and constituting one of the most astounding revelations of the methods employed by the Powers of violence. Unfortunately, through the circumstances of war, its English translation, published in Greece together with the original, never reached this country, and we believe that its reprinting, from the only copy to be saved after the occupation of Greek territory by the enemy, will be a service to history and of present use in enlightening the British public.

The Greek White Book is a collection of diplomatic texts, presented objectively and covering given events within a given period of time. It opens with the events of the 7 April 1939, the date of the attack against Albania, which itself prefaced the attack against Greece. But it is well known even to those who have only a slight acquaintance with international affairs that Italian designs on Greece had been conceived at a much earlier date. We do not intend to have recourse to ancient or mediæval history. It is enough to turn to the recent past that our own generation has lived, and which, beginning with the year 1912, when the question of the Dodecanese arose, has been marked by Italian acts directed against Greece, interspersed at rare and short-lived intervals with deceptive manifestations of friendship.

On landing on the Dodecanese Islands on the 5 May 1912, the commanders of the Italian forces, General Ameglio and Admiral Presbitero, made the following declaration to the Greek Archbishop:

"We assure you in the most categorical manner that, at the conclusion of this war, your islands, which are only provisionally occupied by Italy, will be granted an autonomous régime. We give you this assurance both as soldiers and as Christians, and you may regard this statement as you would regard the words of the Gospel."

The sequel is well known. A few weeks later the persecution, the banishment, the imprisonment of the Greek islanders had begun. When the Balkan War broke out Italy was quick to seize the opportunity in order to conclude an advantageous peace with the Ottoman Empire. This, among other things, allowed Italy not to evacuate the Dodecanese until such time as the last vestiges of internal opposition in Libya should have disappeared, a condition that could be fulfilled only with difficulty, and enabled her to draw out her occupation until an opportunity for her finally to settle in them should arise.

At the other extremity of the Greek world, where the Ionian and Adriatic seas meet, and where, for thousands of years, the historical, geographical, ethnological, strategic, and economic boundary of Hellenism has been set, there, too, Italian opposition showed itself implacable. For when, in the last weeks of the year 1912, the Greek forces in their victorious

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advance, came up to Valona, Italy brusquely imposed her 'Veto' on their further progress. The Greek Government yielded to *force majeure*, and the Greek occupation in Northern Epirus was limited to the districts of Argyrokastro and Koritza that were indisputably Greek; but, even in the case of these districts, for whose liberation blood had been shed, Greece's irrefutable claim was soon called in question by Italy. She exerted strong pressure on the other Great Powers and, with the complicity of Austria, contrived that Greece should be required to evacuate these districts. Greece had again to yield to *force majeure*. But on their own initiative the local inhabitants took up arms in order to preserve their liberty, and thus Greek blood was again shed, as it was shed for a third time in 1940–41. The Protocol of Corfu, dated the 17 May 1914, was the fruit of the Northern Epirotes' victorious struggle; it provided full safeguard for the autonomy of the two districts of Northern Epirus inhabited by Greeks, with regard to schools, churches, military service, and, in general, with regard to administration. International recognition of the Protocol was embodied in a declaration, dated the 18 July 1914, made to the Greek Government by the Ministers at Athens of the six Great Powers. In October 1914, at the invitation of the Allies, and with Italy's assent, Greece again sent an army into the two districts for the purpose of preserving order.

But in 1917 Italy took advantage of Greece's internal difficulties in order arbitrarily to occupy both Northern and Southern Epirus; the occupation lasted for about two years, and was marked by harsh cruelties towards the unfortunate Greek population of these districts.

At the end of the first world war Greece found herself in the forefront of the victorious Powers, thanks to the part that the Greek Army had played on the Macedonian front, where the enemy's collapse had started; the end of that war coincided with one of those short intervals, on which Italy was wont to rely in order to gain time at difficult moments, and with the deliberate intention of repudiating her pledged word as soon as opportunity offered. On the 29 July 1919, the Veniselos-Tittoni agreement was signed; it was a kind of general settlement of the questions outstanding between the two countries. In return for heavy Greek sacrifices, Italy recognized Greek rights in the Dodecanese and Northern Epirus. The calm did not remain unbroken for long. Only a few hours before the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres, Italy showed reluctance in the matter of honouring her signature of the 29 July 1919. It was necessary for Veniselos to threaten to leave the Peace Conference in order to bring Italy into line and oblige her to sign the Treaty of 10 August 1920, by which the Dodecanese was ceded to Greece. In addition, Italy was compelled to accept a decision of the British, American, and French delegations to the Peace Conference, recognizing the justice of Greek views in the matter of Northern Epirus.

The Greco-Turkish War of 1920–22 gave Italy a fresh opportunity of disregarding her obligations. She used this war as a pretext to defer her fulfilment of the conditions both of the Treaty of 1920 and of the Agreement of 1919, and, when Greece had lost the war, Italy denounced the Treaty of Sèvres, concerning the Dodecanese, unilaterally. Simultaneously, in Northern Epirus the events of 1913 were being repeated with Italy exerting pressure in order to ensure that the definite frontier between

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Greece and Albania should be drawn to the former's disadvantage. The relative Protocol, like that of the 17 December 1913, was also signed at Florence, on the 27 January 1925.

Italy, however, was not content. After Epirus her aim was, by one means or another, to gain a foothold on the island of Corfu. To this end she staged one of the most infamous examples of international violence. In August 1923 the Italian General Tellini was murdered at a point close to the Greco-Albanian frontier, under highly suspicious circumstances. Italy immediately presented Greece with a ruthless ultimatum that, in its terms, recalls the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia of 1914; the Italian navy bombarded Corfu, a demilitarized city, killing several civilians, mostly refugee children, and occupied the island. It was the strong solidarity of the small countries in the League of Nations, to which the case was referred, and the firm attitude of Great Britain that compelled Italy to evacuate Corfu, after she had obtained from the Conference of Ambassadors—to which the affair was eventually sent—the satisfaction of all her demands, including an indemnity of approximately £500,000.

But, although the international agreement for the cession to her of the Dodecanese and Northern Epirus had not been carried out, Greece still held two important contractual pledges covering these two questions. These were: as regards the Dodecanese, Article 15 of the Treaty of Lausanne, under which Turkey renounced her rights to the islands, and the famous Article 16 of the same Treaty, which lays it down that the question of the Dodecanese is to be settled between the 'interested parties,' a condition that clearly refers to Greece and Italy, who had signed the aforementioned Treaty of Sèvres, relating to this matter, Italy as having taken over the islands from Turkey, and Greece as the party entitled to them by reason of the purely Greek nature of the population; and, as regards Northern Epirus, the Albanian declaration, dated the 2 October 1921, regarding minorities; by this a pledge was given that the Greek character of the districts of Argyrokastro and Koritza would be preserved.

Italy made strenuous and unceasing attempts to invalidate these pledges. The settlement envisaged by Article 16 never materialised. Moreover, when, in 1928, in pursuance of a far-sighted diplomatic policy, Eleutherios Veniselos made friendly overtures to Italy, the latter specifically promised that any movement aimed at the de-nationalization of the Greek populations under its sovereignty would cease; but the situation deteriorated. On the one hand, Greece insisted on honouring her pledge by removing every cause of friction between the two countries. With this end in view she dissolved all the Dodecanesian and Northern Epirote organizations existing within her territory, those even that dated back to the days of Ottoman rule or that served purely philanthropic purposes. On the other hand, Italy initiated a system of the harshest persecution against everything Greek, directly in the Dodecanese, indirectly in Northern Epirus, through the instruments of her policy.

This persecution took the form of two parallel methods. The positive method consisted of the uprooting of the Greek element in every possible way, by unwarrantable oppression, by the enforcement of laws ruinous to agriculture and cattle-farming, and by the imposition of harsh taxation that compelled the Greek inhabitants to emigrate and seek a better fortune

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in distant countries, such as the Belgian Congo and East Africa. The negative method was to reserve the most fertile districts of Rhodes, the richest plains of Epirus, for the establishment of Italian settlers. Simultaneously, the rigorous pressure of violence aimed at driving those Greeks that remained to forswear everything Greek. The use of the Greek language was held a crime; schools that were famed for their learning, the Venetokleion Gymnasium and the Amarantion Girls' School in Rhodes, the Hippocration Gymnasium in Cos, and even the schools of primary education were closed down; Greek children were obliged to betray their national and family traditions and to be nurtured in the ways of the Fascist Youth organizations.

The same thing occurred in Northern Epirus. In the pre-war period there had existed more than two hundred Greek schools; by 1925 this number had been more than halved, and thereafter showed a continuous decline:

School Year.	*Schools.*	*Teachers.*
1925–26	78	113
1926–27	68	102
1927–28	66	95
1928–29	60	85
1929–30	63	83
1930–31	64	82
1931–32	43	50
1932–33	10	11
1933–34	0	0

Greece was compelled to have recourse to the League of Nations and to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague. Her case was upheld by that body by its decision of the 6 April 1935, and some Greek schools re-opened. But their number was greatly reduced, and it was in an atmosphere of terrorism that teachers and pupils worked. The Greeks of Northern Epirus drew but scant hope from the years 1935–40; with the rest of the nation they shared the martyrdom of 1941.

But, it may be asked, was Italy's undeclared war on Greece restricted to the Dodecanese and Epirus? Far from it. For the work of Italian hands and of Italian gold could be traced wherever an anti-Greek movement existed: among the underground organizations of the Bulgarian Comitadjis, in Albania among the venal advocates of an insane imperialism, in Bucharest among a handful of incorrigible Koutsovalachs, obsequious devotees of Rumania. For thirty years, from 1912 until to-day, the tale of Greek policy in its relations with Italy has been the tale of a long calvary; the small State sees clearly that its sincerity, its good intentions, its sacrifices are of no avail; it has been marked down by the covetousness of a far more powerful neighbour.

The abscess finally burst. The immediate cause was the iniquitous and premeditated attack of the 28 October 1940, the crowning act in the tale of Italian designs. The facts are set out in this White Book. But at this point it is interesting to note that the following statement bears witness to the correctness of Greece's conduct in the period of neutrality that preceded the attack. The statement was made by Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons on the 5 November 1940:

"We have most carefully abstained from any action likely to draw upon the Greeks the enmity of the criminal dictators. For their part,

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the Greeks have maintained so strict a neutrality that we were unacquainted with their dispositions or their intentions."

The question now arises: Was Germany her Axis partner's accomplice in the infamous act of 28 October 1940? The inexorable logic of events leads us unhesitatingly to answer, Yes. Unfortunately, the Greek Government left Athens scarcely more than a fortnight after the attack that Germany had so long premeditated; in the circumstances, it was not possible to issue a new White Book; its contents would have been as illuminating as those of the present book. But, strangely enough, that want is made good by the German White Book itself (issue No. 7), which seeks to justify the attacks against Yugoslavia and Greece. The impression that it creates is an astounding one. Out of a total of 180 pages, only 36 pages are devoted to matters concerning Greece. They contain 42 texts, the majority taken from the French archives, others being merely extracts from the public speeches of politicians. There is nothing concrete, nothing that incriminates Greece; some information submitted by irresponsible persons, some notes made by the French Staff regarding possible operations in the Balkans. There are only three documents of any importance (pp. 172–174): two are telegrams from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the German Minister in Athens, dated respectively the 2 and 24 August 1940. The third is a memorandum concerning the meeting of Von Ribbentrop and the Greek Minister in Berlin, at Fuschl on the 27 August. These documents read as follows:

The first telegram:

"Please discover whether and how Greek seamen become liable to punishment for refusing to make the voyage to England. If penal provisions are still applicable, please point out that it is quite incomprehensible to the German Government for Greece to refuse, on the one hand, to exert any influence on shipping firms, while seamen, on the other hand, are compelled by law to make voyages which involve extreme danger to life. Such conduct must give rise to the impression here that Greece, in entire opposition to her own true interests, is mainly concerned in supporting our enemy, Great Britain, in every possible way. That this cannot remain without effect on our whole attitude towards Greece and the Greek Government, quite apart from our conduct of the war at sea, requires no explanation."

The second telegram:

"The fact that the greater part of Greek tonnage is still being employed for Britain is perhaps our most serious reproach against Greece. Juridical counter-statements are not sound. We shall expect Greece at once to eliminate legal obligation for Greek seamen to travel to Britain and to prohibit all voyages to England by ships under the Greek flag, for which action the blockade declarations by Germany and Italy offer the best reason. If, on the other hand, the Greek Government maintain their present attitude, this may lead to dangers more serious for the whole interests of Greece than the temporary seizure of ships belonging to Greeks living abroad."

The memorandum:

"The Minister for Foreign Affairs informed the Greek Minister that we divided the countries into those who had taken up an attitude

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in favour of the Axis and those who had assumed one in favour of Britain. We regarded Greece as a country which had opted for Britain, because the Greeks had accepted the British guarantee, supplied the British with war material, and sailed their ships into the British blockade area. We had, moreover, other evidence which proved to us Greece's pro-British attitude. To the German Minister for Foreign Affairs this attitude appeared imprudent. In the coming centuries Europe would be controlled by the Axis Powers, and the attitude of the Axis towards the European States would be regulated by the attitude of those States towards Britain during Germany's and Italy's life and death struggle. The German Minister for Foreign Affairs could only advise the Greeks, first, to adapt themselves to this situation in their general policy, and, secondly, as a result of this attitude, to place themselves on the friendliest terms with the Italians and come to terms with them. The Minister for Foreign Affairs emphasized to the Greek Minister that the Mediterranean was a sphere of interest of our Italian allies, and that we were therefore not directly concerned. But as the Greek Government had requested the advice of the German Government the Minister for Foreign Affairs could only urgently advise the Greek Minister, both on account of the immediate, and also of the more distant future, to remedy the Italian grievances as quickly as possible and comply with the eventual wishes of the Italians. The Greek Minister was apparently seriously perturbed at our having proof of the unneutral attitude of Greece, and asked for further details, which the Minister for Foreign Affairs refused. In addition, he complained of the Italian attitude, but this was refuted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who referred to the favour shown by Greece to British maritime interests, of which we were also aware. The Minister for Foreign Affairs also drew the Minister's attention to the further fact that Athens and Greece were at present the headquarters of the entire intelligence and propaganda departments of the British Secret Service."

These documents are among the last in the German White Book. From that point onwards there is only slight information concerning movements of British forces in Greece in the middle of March, that is, after the German army had passed through Bulgaria and reached the Greek frontier. The conclusions to be drawn from this Book are lamentable, and wholly to Germany's discredit. The only grounds upon which Germany bases her condemnation of Greece are three in number: First, that Greece accepted the British guarantee in April 1939. Even though at the same time she accepted the Italian guarantee also. . . . Second, that we were delivering war material to Britain. . . . This charge is too grotesque to call for comment. Third, and more important, an accusation that is constantly being repeated, that we did not respect the German blockade, imposed in violation of every international rule. Germany's contention was that Greece should have signed her own death warrant by immobilizing her mercantile marine, which after the outbreak of war and the contraction of Greek foreign trade, was almost her only source of livelihood. A further ground of complaint was cited, that Greece was a centre for the supply of British information; but the vast

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official network of espionage maintained in the country by Germany, Italy, and their satellites was conveniently forgotten. Ribbentrop's memorandum is astounding. Greece is peremptorily threatened: "If you are not with us, you are against us." There is no place for neutrality. Greece must range herself with the Axis, because the Axis will settle the fortunes of the world. But would Greece, in submitting to, and aligning herself with the future lords of the earth, be accepted by them as an honoured ally? Certainly not. To obtain this favour she would first have to 'come to terms' with Italy. "To comply with the eventual wishes of the Italians." That is, retrospectively, to accept what Italy had in mind on the 11 August 1940, i.e. at the very least the territorial mutilation of Greek Epirus and the humiliation of Greece by her admission under compulsion that she had herself committed the crime staged by the Italians (see Document 11 of the Greek White Book), and, prospectively, to accept the Italian claims of the 28 October 1940, viz. to agree to the sacrifice of Greek independence, integrity, and honour. When the Greek Minister asked to be told what were the concrete charges brought against Greece, there was no reply; and when he expressed complaints against Italy—doubtless he must have mentioned the cruiser *Helle*—it was again objected that we were employing our mercantile marine for the assistance of the British. In this way the Germans made it quite clear that they were intent on giving full support to Italy's attitude towards Greece. In this way also they associated themselves with the events of the 11 and 15 August 1940, as later they were to prove their complicity in the aggression of the 28 October. In view of these facts how could there remain the slightest doubt in the mind of any thinking person that these two confederates in crime were from the first moment agreed upon every point, and that therefore the '*No*' which Greece threw in the face of Italy on the 28 October would inevitably have to be repeated, with equal determination and still more courage, in the face of Germany when the time came. The two dictators' meeting at Florence on the 28 October was direct proof of this. The '*No*' of the 6 April 1941 was inherent in the fateful '*No*' of the 28 October 1940.

In fact, from the 28 October 1940 until the 6 April 1941, Greece found herself in relation to Germany in the same terrible dilemma in which she had found herself in relation to Italy from the 11 August 1940 (the date of the staging of the Daout Hodja affair, that was followed four days later by the torpedoing of the *Helle*) until the 28 October 1940. On the 11 and 15 August Greece realized that her honour and her existence were threatened. In any case she had to make preparations to defend both the one and the other. But the enemy, who by a cunning expedient had brought about the insidious agreement of September 1939, by which the Greek military forces were removed from the Albanian frontier, was on the watch so that at the slightest movement, whether it were an advance of the Greek forces of defence or an endeavour on the part of Greek diplomacy to come to an understanding with her great and powerful friends, he should proclaim to the world that we were plotting against him. This was the dilemma in which Greece was placed: either to remain defenceless at the moment when the enemy should judge it opportune to attack her, or to be considered the aggressor and the trouble maker. By her patience and wisdom Greece resolved the dilemma; she both ensured

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the essentials of her defence, that later was to pass into a brilliant offensive, and demonstrated the impeccability of her attitude; the tale is a memorable one and a small part of it appears in the present book. When, on the 28 October, Italy threw off the mask, Greece found herself in a similar dilemma in her relations with Germany. It was obvious that the latter was supporting Italy and that even if we succeeded in destroying our Italian adversary in Albania, we should still have to reckon with the Germans, ranged behind him. On the other hand, Germany was on the alert for our slightest defence preparation; it may be noted, in this connection, that, against such an enemy, our case called not so much for any additional military measures on our own part as for an appeal for the assistance of Great Britain, who had guaranteed our independence and integrity. But Germany was on the alert merely in order that she might allege that we were the soldiers of Great Britain, that we were disturbing the peace and seeking to set the Balkans alight. Fresh tests of patience and of prudence were required of Greece to enable her to pass between the Scylla and Charybdis of German prevarication and reach her post of honour of the 6 April. We append some documents, few in number, but of great importance. Following the loss of our archives in Athens we were fortunate enough to find these in the archives of the Legation in London—fortunate in that under the war-time conditions of October 1940 to May 1941 few of our diplomatic documents could with safety be sent abroad.

Let us now explain why, apart from the evidence of the German Book, Germany was manifestly as much our enemy as was Italy.

First, it is surely ridiculous for anyone to imagine that in the life-and-death struggle between the Powers of violence and the free peoples, either of those Powers could stand by, indifferent to the destruction or even the weakening of the other. Second, it is a well-known fact that the movements of these accomplices in crime have always been planned in unison and with mathematical precision. On the very morning of the Italian attack of the 28 October, which, it was anticipated, would be a lightning stroke, the Axis leaders were meeting in Florence, obviously for the purpose of working out the grandiose schemes that were to follow the overthrow of Greece. (We shall consider these schemes in the following paragraphs.)

Some people have maintained that perhaps Germany did not desire the attack on Greece, but was compelled to accept the *fait accompli* and to shape her policy to it. But Italy's relationship of dependence on Germany is known. Is it not foolish to suppose that she could have undertaken an enterprise of this character, vitally important to the whole Axis programme for the conduct of the war, without the consent of the more powerful partner?

The fact is that in the attack against Greece Italian desires tallied with German interests. At all times and in all fields the Italians have sought the overthrow of Greece. The Germans regarded it as an indispensable condition for the execution of their plan, which, in the light of subsequent events, may be reconstructed along these lines:

It was drawn up with an eye to the campaign against Russia, fixed for the spring of 1941, and provided that, with Greece and Libya as the Axis's main bases and points of departure, the winter of 1940–41

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should be devoted to the expulsion of Great Britain from the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East as far as the Persian Gulf. It is worthy of note that, if the Axis's aim had been, not the attainment of wider objectives, but merely the subjugation of Greece, they would have waited until the end of the war in order to realize it without any effort. For if the Axis emerged victorious, it would naturally be impossible for Greece to offer serious resistance surrounded by an enslaved Europe.

In the first days of November 1940 the Italian armies, advancing from Albania through the mountain passes of the Pindus range, had come to within ten miles of Metsovo. If they had managed to occupy this town they would have cut off Southern Greece from Macedonia, the Greek army would have been split, the troops in Epirus would have been isolated, and the whole defence system of Greece would have collapsed within a few days. With Greece occupied, and the Adriatic and Ionian seas passing under the absolute control of the Axis, Yugoslavia would have been hemmed in on all sides, and inevitably subjugated. In that case, the Germans and Italians controlling the whole of the Balkans would have availed themselves of the winter months (in the Near East the most suitable for the conduct of war) in order to set out unhampered from their bases in Greece and Libya for Crete, Cyprus, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Suez, and Egypt.

For this purpose they would have had an ample margin of time and superiority both by land and in the air, seeing that the bulk of the German army and German air force was available; they would have had even naval superiority, because at that time the Italian navy was still intact. On the contrary, the British forces in the Near East, abandoned by their French allies on the fall of France two months earlier, were few in number and widely dispersed. In Syria, Iraq and Iran the Axis had already set up strong centres through which it had gained some sympathisers and supporters. These countries were ripe to follow the example of the European countries which had submitted. Turkey would thus have been encircled and, as the Axis believed, would have been drawn, willingly or unwillingly, into the crusade against the Soviets; in such an event the attack against Russia could have been directed from the Caucasus also.

If it had been possible to follow this plan, the campaign against Russia would have started much earlier, at the beginning of May instead of the 22 June; in addition, Germany would have been unhampered in the Near East, Iran and the Persian Gulf ports would have been under German control and the possibility of sending reinforcements to Russia through the Indian Ocean would have been ruled out.

The question arises: Since the success of the Axis's whole plan for the conquest of the Near East depended on the favourable outcome of the Italian attack on Greece, why did Germany not hasten to the assistance of Italy immediately after the early reverses? Why did she allow six valuable months to pass, during which Italian prestige was shattered, and the Axis's great strategic plan collapsed?

There were many reasons. In the first weeks of the Italian withdrawal in Albania, Berlin believed that Italy would, unaided, succeed in retrieving the situation. By the time it had been made clear that this was beyond her power, winter was already well advanced. If the Germans had, at that season of the year, despatched reinforcements in an impro-

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vised manner, they might have exposed themselves to peril at sea, and even on land they might have been surprised. For they did not hold complete supremacy in the Southern Adriatic, nor would they have had time to make adequate preparations in Albania. Furthermore, a direct attack against Greece, launched through the Balkans, would have been faced with serious difficulties of a political character: the uncertainty of Russia's and Yugoslavia's reactions to such an attack; the firmness of Turkey's attitude that followed the initial Greek victories. It would also have been faced with difficulties of a strategic character: the lack of bridges over the Danube, the inadequacy of aerodromes in the Balkans, and the dislocation of Rumania's railway system that had resulted from the earthquakes of November 1940, and made it impossible for a time to transport any substantial number of troops. All these factors compelled Hitler to defer his attack upon Greece until the spring, and to give up the idea of subduing the Near East during the winter of 1940–41. When the occupation of Greece had been completed on the 1 June 1941 by the seizure of Crete, it was far too late for the execution of his Mediterranean and Eastern projects. These would have necessitated the abandonment of the campaign against Russia, the central aim of his whole policy and of his strategy. Moreover, the season was unsuited to large-scale operations in the Near East, while the British positions had been greatly strengthened by the elimination of enemy influence in Iraq, followed a little later by the clearing up of the position in Syria. Judged in the perspective of almost a year's interval, Greece's seven months' resistance to the Axis may be said to have fulfilled its wider strategic purpose.

This view is generally accepted, and the testimony to its truth is of high authority. On the 23 October 1941, in a speech at Manchester, Mr. Anthony Eden made the following statement:

> "Greece's brave defence upset the time-table of Hitler's plans and delayed his prearranged attack on Russia for at least six most important weeks. What would those six weeks of campaigning weather be worth to Hitler now? The evacuation from Greece and the battle for Crete gave us time to scotch the German attempt to establish themselves in Syria and to free Iraq from the Rashid Ali's usurpery government."

Mr. Eden made a further statement of similar tenor in the House of Commons on the 8 January 1942.

This point had been confirmed by General Wavell also; in a broadcast speech at Simla, made on the 3 September 1941, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the declaration of war, he said:

> "Enemy losses in Crete have certainly cost the Germans Iraq and Syria."

On the 5 November 1941, at a luncheon given by the National Defence of Public Interests Committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Nathan of Churt, in honour of H.M. the King of the Hellenes, the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Richard Law, expressed the British people's admiration of the great people personified in the King of the Hellenes, who had done so much to win final victory in this war. The way in which Greece had stood up to the might of the German invasion was not only a glorious example, it was one of the decisive battles of the war, and, as they could now believe, one of the decisive battles of the world. They knew that the stand made by Greece

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postponed the invasion of Russia for at least six weeks. What would Hitler give now to have those forty-two days back again? Hundreds of thousands of Germans had perished, or would perish, in the snows of Russia because in one tiny corner of Europe a King and his people had said that come what might they would never submit. That pledge was being kept; Greece was still in the war. Greek forces were fighting now with the Allies. They would be built up from strength to strength until they played their full part in the final victory. The people of Greece might be sure that the British Government would always give a full measure of assistance to any free country which was based on democratic institutions.

On the 15 November 1941, the semi-official *Ulush* of Ankara, in a leading article appraising war operations on the Eastern front, stated that events had shown that the Germans should have started this campaign in the spring. The delay had been imposed by the necessity of undertaking the Balkan campaign, which in its turn had been dictated by the Greco-Italian War. The avoidance of this campaign would have permitted the Germans to reach the Caucasus in good time, and to carry out their plan with success.

In the *Cumhuriet* on the 26 November 1941, General Erkilet wrote as follows:

"The fact that the Germans had fixed the 15 May as the date for the opening of hostilities against Russia proves that they had anticipated a campaign of four months' duration, that is, until the 15 September, approximately the season when the rains start. But the Balkan campaign caused the execution of the German plans to be deferred until the 22 June. From this, one may realize the part that Greece has played in the Balkans, and how effective its influence has been on the development of the war."

On the 21 December 1941, the *Son Posta* wrote:

"The effect of the winter on the operations on the Eastern Front is no longer open to doubt. But it is also a matter of certainty that these circumstances were brought about by the campaign on the Balkan front. That obstacle compelled Germany to defer her attack on Russia. It may be said that the Balkan operations will perhaps be found to have been the historic turning point of this war."

On the 14 November 1941, the *Nacion* of Buenos Aires wrote as follows:

"In 1940 the Germans were planning to deal a mortal blow at the British Empire in the Near East. But Axis plans were upset and ruined by the resistance in Greece and afterwards in Crete. The Germans lost valuable time and, in consequence, the attack against Russia, that had originally been fixed for the middle of May, could be launched only in the second fortnight of June. The delay of one and a half months influenced the operations in Russia."

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The *Times* wrote on the 10 January 1942:

"The Greeks have merited the respect and the aid of their chief allies by their manly help in delaying Hitler's attack on Russia."

And even the Germans, entangled as always in the meshes of their sophistry, admit this indirectly, as appears from a report from Berlin, published in the *Basler Nachrichten* of the 11 January 1942:

"Official circles in the Wilhelmstrasse accepted Mr. Eden's statements that Yugoslavia and Greece's resistance delayed the German attack against Russia for six weeks, as an admission that, by the despatch of military forces to Greece, Britain was the cause of Germany's campaign in the Balkans."

The Germans, however, forget to mention that the despatch of British forces to Greece was preceded by the German occupation of Rumania and Bulgaria.

In conclusion, mention should be made of the small number of our diplomatic documents that we were able to save. They are of fundamental importance, and free from any ambiguity.

The first is a memorandum, written by the late Premier, General Metaxas himself, on the 20 December 1940, when, for the first and last time since the Italian attack, he was visited by the German Minister, who sought to speak to him about the question of our commercial relations with Germany. After this technical discussion, the Minister, in a purely private capacity, raised the subject of our war situation. Metaxas writes:

"We sustained," I said, "an entirely unjustifiable attack, although we had done everything possible to maintain the strictest neutrality. I can now disclose to you that we declined to afford the British even those facilities that are permitted by the fundamental rules of international law, and they accepted this without protest, showing thereby a thorough understanding of our position. Consequently, there was no justification whatsoever for the unprovoked attack. But the Italians wished to conquer Greece. For that reason Greece rose up as one man, and we shall resist until the end, that is, until Italy has been expelled from the Balkans." Prince Erbach thereupon asked whether our alliance with Great Britain was directed against Germany also. "*If you touch us in the Balkans*," I replied, "*it certainly is.*" "We do not propose," the Minister replied, "to cause you any trouble in the Balkans; Germany will do nothing that might harm the interests of Greece." Next, wishing to make the discussion more general, he asked for my views as to how the war with England would end. "On that question," I said, "I cannot continue our conversation, because we are the allies of England, and it is not possible for us to deal with such a subject in our conversation."

The second document is a telegram of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Greek Legation in London, bearing date 5 January 1941:

"Please see Mr. Eden and stress to him the very grave danger for all the Balkans that is created by the concentration in their direction of

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German forces. *In the event of an attack, even if she remain alone, Greece will for certain resist to the end.*

METAXAS."

The third document is a memorandum, also written by General Metaxas, on the 15 January 1941, following some highly important conferences which had been held at that time for the purpose of discussing the whole military situation. Among other military and political views, the Memorandum stated:

"No case can arise of our making a separate peace with Italy; that can never happen, even if we obtain a guarantee from Germany. The reason is that I do not trust Germany. I do not believe that the Italians torpedoed the *Helle* without the knowledge of the Germans; I do not believe that the Italians invaded Greece without the assent of the Germans, and I anticipate the materializing of an attack on Greece by Germany, *to whose every proposal I shall oppose the same refusal that I opposed to the Italians.*"

The fourth document is a declaration, dated the 18 January 1941, made by General Metaxas, and communicated to the British Government:

"*We have not the slightest intention of provoking a German attack. But if such an attack materializes we are determined to oppose it in any way possible and at any sacrifice.*"

The fifth is a declaration of the 8 February 1941, made by Metaxas's successor, Premier Alexander Korizis, and communicated to the British Government:

"*We remain steadfast in our firm resolve to resist a possible German attack at the cost of any sacrifice, hereby renewing the declaration made on the* 18 *January by the late Premier Metaxas.*"

The sixth is an Order to the fighting forces made by H.M. King George of the Hellenes, on the 15 April 1941:

"From the Commander-in-Chief's reports I am fully acquainted with the situation as it is developing. The honour and interest of Greece and the fate of the Greek race, preclude all thoughts of capitulation, the moral calamity of which would be incomparably greater than any other disaster. *In view of this I appeal to your patriotism as soldiers and as Greeks, enjoining you to do your duty to the end in the above spirit. It must not be forgotten that the British Army continues to fight in defence of the Greek soil.* GEORGE R."

The seventh is a long Order addressed to the fighting forces by command of H.M. the King by the Vice-President of the Government, Vice-Admiral Alexander Sakellariou, on the 20 April 1941. As is well-known, the King himself had on that day taken over the Presidency of the Govern-

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ment, with Admiral Sakellariou as Vice-President. The principal points of the order run as follows:

"I fully appreciate the situation from the standpoint of your communication to us. *But there is every need for us to continue the struggle. This can be achieved by one final effort. Consider the historic responsibility of this moment, and, in the reflection that heroic decisions are called for, do even more than your duty. There is no dishonour in being taken prisoner if every effort, human or superhuman, has been exhausted, whereas the desertion of our allies would wipe out the capital that has up to now accrued to our country through the blood of our heroic dead.*"

The eighth is an order sent, on my instructions, to the army of Epirus by the Commander-in-Chief, General Papagos, on the 21 April 1941, the day on which I took over the Presidency of the Government:

"I am informed that Lieut.-General Tsolakoglou has taken the initiative in negotiating a capitulation. *It must be understood by everyone that the country's highest interests forbid this. I appeal to the patriotism of all. The Army must struggle on to the extreme limit of its powers. Replace Tsolakoglou immediately.*"

Thus, four consecutive Greek Governments, with remarkable consistency in determining and directing national policy and under the fervent inspiration of our King, followed the hard but straight path of duty. This path was again followed through the smoke and flames of the battle of Crete.

There was gathered together the flower of our fighting youth, the Evelpides and the Ikaroi, the majority of whom, to their everlasting glory, remained on the field of honour. This is the path that we shall follow until final victory. In the Middle East a small but determined band of soldiers and airmen is in training so that, when the hour strikes, it may set out in company with our navy, whose activities have never ceased, to play its part in the final liberation of our country.

From all this a conclusion that will remain in history may be drawn; it is both the synopsis and the moral foundation of Greece's superb struggle of 1940–41: Greece did not provoke the war. But, when others had provoked it, she faced it with all the strength of her soul, well though she knew that two Empires, incomparably more powerful than herself, confronted her. Her action went beyond the bounds of normal human daring, but it was in keeping with the idea of honour, as this has been understood for thousands of years by the Greek nation.

E. J. TSOUDEROS,
Prime Minister of Greece.

LONDON: *February 25th*, 1942.

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Italy's attack upon Greece, launched in the early hours of October 28, 1940, constitutes the culminating point of Italy's endeavour to give effect to certain plans and designs which she had long been harbouring and which began to come to light after Italy's occupation of Albania in April 1939.

In the documents included in Part I of this White Book and which cover the period from the occupation of Albania down to the date of Italy's entry into the war, Italian designs against Greece are veiled, as far as possible, beneath the cloak of demonstrations of friendship and of repeated assurances given to the Hellenic Government of Italy's intention to respect the independence and the territorial integrity of Greece.

After June 10, 1940, the Italian Government gradually comes out into the open. Part II contains a whole series of provocative acts on the part of Italy, which, following on the press campaign over the alleged murder of the bandit Daut Hodja, assume an air of open hostility against Greece. Among the documents here published, it has been thought appropriate, given the severe control exercised by the Fascist Government over the press, to include a certain number of extracts from the publications of the Agence Stefani and the Italian Press.

Part III contains an account of the events associated with Italy's sudden and unprovoked attack on Greece and of the Hellenic Government's attitude towards these events.

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INTRODUCTORY

No. 1

Treaty of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement between Greece and Italy

(Signed at Rome, September 23, 1928).

Article 1

The two High Contracting Parties reciprocally undertake to lend each other mutual support and to co-operate cordially for the purpose of maintaining the order established by the Treaties of Peace of which they are both signatories, and of ensuring that the obligations laid down in the said treaties are respected and fulfilled.

Article 2

Should a Power or Powers make unprovoked attack on either High Contracting Party, the other Party undertakes to observe neutrality throughout the conflict.

Article 3

Should the security and interests of either High Contracting Party be threatened by violent incursions from without, the other Party undertakes to lend it its political and diplomatic support with a view to removing the cause of these threats.

Article 4

In the event of international complications the two High Contracting Parties undertake, if they agree that their joint interests are or may be threatened, to consult together as to the measures to be adopted to safeguard these interests.

Article 5

Greece and Italy undertake to submit to the procedure of conciliation provided for in Articles 8 to 19 below all questions on which they may differ and which it has not been possible to settle by the normal methods of diplomacy.

In the event of the procedure of conciliation being resorted to without success, a judicial settlement shall be sought in accordance with Articles 20 and following of the present Treaty.

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Articles 6-25

(*Lay down the details of the procedures of conciliation and judicial settlement.*)

Article 26

The present Treaty, the interpretation or application of which may not affect the rights and obligations of the High Contracting Parties in virtue of the Covenant of the League of Nations, shall be communicated to the League of Nations for registration, in accordance with Article 18 of the Covenant.

Article 27

Any disputes which may arise with regard either to the interpretation or the execution of the present Treaty shall be submitted direct to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague by a simple application.

Article 28

This Treaty shall be ratified as soon as possible and shall come into force immediately after the exchange of ratifications, which shall take place at Rome. It shall be concluded for a period of five years from the date of the exchange of the instruments of ratification. If it is not denounced six months before the expiration of this period, it shall remain in force for a further period of five years.

In faith whereof the above-named Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Treaty and have affixed their seals thereto.

Done at Rome in duplicate on the twenty-third day of September, one thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight.

(*L.S.*) E. K. VENISELOS (*L.S.*) B. MUSSOLINI

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PART I

FROM THE ITALIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST ALBANIA DOWN TO THE ENTRY OF ITALY INTO THE WAR

(APRIL 7, 1939—JUNE 10, 1940)

Documents Nos. 2-76

No. 2
Italian démenti

Rome, March 17, 1939

An official Italian declaration emphasizes the fact that the rumours circulated abroad of an impending Italian intervention in Albania are malignant falsehoods propagated with the object of disturbing the peace in the Adriatic.

(Published by the "AGENCE D'ATHÈNES")

No. 3
The Minister in Belgrade to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

March 17, 1939

In Foreign Office circles here no importance is attached to the widely circulating rumours concerning an imminent Italian landing at Valona and other points on the Albanian coast. The above rumour, which was broadcast yesterday from Moscow, conflicts with the categorical assurances given by the Italian Government that the latter would respect the *status quo* in the Adriatic.

ROSETTIS

No. 4
The Minister in Belgrade to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

March 18, 1939

The Italian Minister, in the course of his visit to the Yugoslav Prime Minister yesterday, gave him the assurance that Yugoslavia need feel no anxiety whatsoever as far as Albania is concerned.

Notwithstanding this, the Italian Military Attaché left this morning by air for Rome to report to his Chiefs on the rumoured strengthening of the garrisons of Dibra and Prizrend. A member of the staff of the German Legation, in imparting the above news to my Secretary, added that the denial issued yesterday by the Agence Stefani concerning Italian intentions against Albania had failed to carry conviction in well-informed

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circles, seeing that present conditions render the Italian occupation of Albania a necessity.

ROSETTIS

No. 5

The Minister in Belgrade to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

March 24, 1939

The Minister for Foreign Affairs does not credit the disturbing rumours concerning Italian hostile intentions towards Albania. He bases his view on the Italian Government's assurances, which have been solemnly reaffirmed in yesterday's Speech from the Throne before the Italian Parliament.

ROSETTIS

No. 6

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 3, 1939

Our Vice-Consul at Valona cables that Italians there talk openly of an immediate occupation of Corfu in the event of a general conflagration.

SKEFERIS

No. 7

The Chargé d'Affaires in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 4, 1939

The former Albanian Minister, who has been recently recalled, told the Turkish Ambassador that the difficulties which have arisen between Italy and Albania are of a financial nature. Personally he does not believe in the danger of Italian military intervention in Albania. This has strengthened the Turkish Ambassador's belief that all news concerning an impending Italian military intervention in Albania are unfounded. The above is corroborated by the Italian Foreign Minister's spontaneous communication, a week ago, to the Yugoslav Minister, to the effect that Italy would respect Albanian integrity.

ROMANOS

No. 8

The Vice-Consul at Argyrocastro to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

March 4, 1939

Kindly send instructions concerning the following matter: The Greeks in Argyrocastro are anxious to know what should be their attitude in case of an anti-Italian outburst among the population of Argyrocastro.

CHIMARIOS

No. 9

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Vice-Consul at Argyrocastro

April 4, 1939

You should firmly recommend to the Greeks to refrain from any anti-Italian demonstrations.

MAVROUDIS

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No. 10

The Chargé d'Affaires in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 4, 1939

Count Ciano has given the British Ambassador the formal assurance that Italy has not the slightest intention of intervening in Albania. She desires to keep out of any fresh complications.

ROMANOS

No. 11

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Tirana

April 5, 1939

Please urgently instruct all Consular Officers under your jurisdiction to recommend to all Greeks to refrain from anti-Italian demonstrations of any kind, in accordance with the desire of the Greek Government.

MAVROUDIS

No. 12

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 6, 1939

I have wired urgently to all Consular Officers your formal instructions contained in yesterday's cable.

SKEFERIS

No. 13

The Minister in London to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 6, 1939

The Foreign Office informed me to-day that the Italian Government have given the formal assurance that they are not considering any *coup de main* in Albania.

SIMOPOULOS

No. 14

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 7, 1939

At 6 o'clock this morning five Italian warships began bombarding Durazzo. They are accompanied by two transports.

SKEFERIS

No. 15

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 7, 1939

Since this morning Italian planes have been flying over Tirana, throwing leaflets telling the population to refuse obedience to their Government and not to resist the Italians. The leaflets add that the Italian forces will remain as long as is necessary for the re-establishment of peace, order and justice.

SKEFERIS

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No. 16

The Minister in Belgrade to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 8, 1939

The Prime Minister of Yugoslavia has assured me that the Italian Government have renewed their former assurance that the treaties concerning the Adriatic and Albania will be respected, adding that Italy's action is temporary.

ROSETTIS

No. 17

The Chargé d'Affaires in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 8, 1939

Count Ciano assured the British Ambassador that Italy has no intention of interfering with Albanian integrity and independence and that the Italian army will retire as soon as order has been restored and an Albanian Government friendly to Italy installed. The same assurance has been given by Count Ciano to the American Ambassador.

ROMANOS

No. 18

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 8, 1939

The Commander of the first battalion to enter Tirana declared that Italy is coming to create a greater Albania.

SKEFERIS

No. 19

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

April 8, 1939

I have just been informed by the Préfet of Florina that King Zog arrived there suddenly, escorted by the Albanian Prime Minister and a number of other persons whose names have not yet been ascertained. His entry into Greek territory took place without previous warning, doubtless owing to the fact that since yesterday afternoon no telegrams have been received from the Legation in Tirana. Kindly communicate this urgently to the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and assure him that the Royal Government will immediately take all necessary steps to prevent any political activity on the part of King Zog which might constitute an abuse of the hospitality extended to political exiles.

I have already communicated the above to the Italian Chargé d'Affaires.

METAXAS

No. 20

The Chargé d'Affaires in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 9, 1939

In the absence of Count Ciano, who has left for Tirana, I saw his Principal Private Secretary and made him the communication concerning

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the arrival of King Zog in Greece. Signor Anfuso expressed the thanks of the Italian Government and said that he would bring it to the knowledge of the Prime Minister.

ROMANOS

No. 21

Memorandum of conversation between the Italian Chargé d'Affaires in Athens and the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

April 9, 1939

In reply to the communication made to the Italian Government concerning the unexpected arrival in Greece of King Zog and following the assurance that no activity or demonstration of a political nature on his part would be permitted, the Italian Chargé d'Affaires communicated to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs the following telegram from Signor Mussolini:

"Please see Metaxas in person and express my entire satisfaction for the attitude Greece has adopted towards Zog, as well as my thanks for the steps taken to prevent political activities on the part of Zog that might in any way jeopardize the cordial relations between Italy and Greece, the preservation of which will form the basis of my policy in the present as in the future."

No. 22

The Chargé d'Affaires in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 9, 1939

The Principal Private Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs has just asked me to transmit to your Excellency Signor Mussolini's thanks for yesterday evening's communication which has given him the greatest satisfaction.

At Signor Mussolini's special request, Signor Anfuso showed me a telegram in the Prime Minister's own handwriting instructing the Chargé d'Affaires at Athens to make Your Excellency a declaration in a similar spirit. Signor Anfuso drew my attention to Signor Mussolini's declaration affirming his belief that nothing can disturb the existing friendship between Italy and Greece; this friendship is considered by him as forming the basis of the present and future relations between the two countries. Signor Anfuso stressed the fact that the above is more than a simple communication and constituted a solemn declaration on Signor Mussolini's part.

ROMANOS

No. 23

The Minister in London to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 9, 1939

The Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs has formally renewed to the British Ambassador in Rome the assurance that Italy will respect the independence of Albania and that the *status quo*, as provided for by the Anglo-Italian Agreement, will not undergo the slightest change.

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He explained to Lord Perth that influential persons in Albania had requested Italian intervention on account of the unbearable situation created by King Zog.

I am confidentially informed that Count Ciano added that the King of Albania some time ago had asked for Italy's assistance, with a view to an attack on Yugoslavia. This information is regarded here with the greatest scepticism.

The British Ambassador replied to the Italian Foreign Minister that he took note of his fresh assurances, at the same time adding that Italian grievances against Albania were not of such a nature as to exclude their solution by negotiation and without resort to force. The British Prime Minister is returning from Scotland to-morrow. My belief is that he is not likely to be satisfied with these new Italian assurances.

An information from a German source has reached me according to which Italy intends to occupy Corfu.

SIMOPOULOS

No. 24

The Minister in London to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 11, 1939

The Foreign Secretary told me that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires had called upon him yesterday evening, in order to assure him on Signor Mussolini's behalf that Italy had no hostile intentions against Greece and Yugoslavia, and that there was no sign of any anxiety on the part of these two countries. He next referred to Corfu and to Great Britain's alleged intention of occupying the island, and added that this would lead to complications.

Lord Halifax replied that "Great Britain does not do that kind of thing," he wished however to declare that, should Italy occupy Corfu, the British Government would take "a grave view" of any such action.

SIMOPOULOS

No. 25

The Minister in London to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 9, 1939

A short while ago I was called to the Foreign Office and received the following communication on behalf of Lord Halifax.

Immediately after I had seen him this morning, the Italian Chargé d'Affaires called upon him. Lord Halifax reminded him of his previous statement to the effect that neither Greece nor Yugoslavia were showing the slightest anxiety and told him that his own information was quite the opposite and that great uneasiness prevailed in Greece, chiefly as the result of the rumours that Italy intended occupying Corfu.

The Italian Chargé d'Affaires replied that this was the first he had heard of any such possibility, and that it could not be true, as it was directly contrary to the declaration he had made to him the night before on behalf of Signor Mussolini.

Lord Halifax said to Signor Crolla that the answer was such as he

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had expected, but that he thought it only right not to leave the slightest doubt in his mind that any such action would be viewed by the British Government "with the gravest concern." It was of vital importance for Great Britain, as well as for Italy, that this point should be made perfectly clear. He therefore requested the Chargé d'Affaires to transmit his words to Rome with absolute accuracy.

The British Ambassador in Rome has been instructed to communicate the foregoing to the Italian Government. In the meantime, Lord Halifax has requested the Italian Chargé d'Affaires to ascertain whether the Italian Government are prepared to corroborate the declaration concerning Corfu made to him, on his own responsibility, by the Chargé d'Affaires.

He also asked him to suggest to his Government that similar assurances be given to the Greek Government.

SIMOPOULOS

No. 26

The Minister in London to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 10, 1939

Lord Halifax has informed me that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires called on him last night and gave him the most formal assurances concerning Italian intentions towards Greece and the respect of her territorial integrity, as regards both the mainland and the islands.

The Italian Chargé d'Affaires in Athens has been instructed to give similar assurances to the Royal Government.

SIMOPOULOS

No. 27

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Rome

April 10, 1939

The Italian Chargé d'Affaires came to see me to-day and, on behalf of Signor Mussolini, made me the following declaration, of which he handed me a written copy:

"All rumours, present or future, concerning a supposed Italian action against Greece are false. The spreading of such rumours can only be due to *agents provocateurs*. Fascist Italy reaffirms her intention to respect absolutely the integrity of both the Greek mainland and islands. Fascist Italy desires to continue and develop still further the friendly relations existing between the two countries and is ready to give concrete proof of these intentions."

I told Signor Fornari I was most grateful to Signor Mussolini for his communication. I admitted that a certain nervousness and uneasiness prevailed among the Greek public, who were alarmed by rumours emanating from all the European broadcasting stations, including certain Italian stations. The present communication puts an end, I said, to a period of coolness in Greco-Italian relations, which will now resume their normal friendly character.

METAXAS

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No. 28

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Legation in Rome

April 11, 1939

Kindly see Signor Mussolini at once and convey to him my warmest thanks for the communication which was made to me yesterday, in his name, by the Italian Chargé d'Affaires. This communication contains the formal assurance that Fascist Italy will fully respect the integrity of the Greek mainland and islands. I accept the above declaration on the part of the Italian Prime Minister with the greatest possible satisfaction. I am firmly convinced that nothing will happen in future to mar the traditional friendship existing between the two countries and that a new era of cordiality and peaceful collaboration between us is about to begin.

METAXAS

No. 29

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 12, 1939

A person who was present at Count Ciano's speech to the officials of the Albanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs has informed me that, amongst other things, Count Ciano declared that Italy would undertake the pacification of Albania and the realisation of her national aspirations.

SKEFERIS

No. 30

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 12, 1939

The Italian troops so far disembarked in Albania amount to three divisions, including numerous tanks. Among the Italian officers there is much talk of military action in the direction of Kossovo and Tsamuria. The action against Tsamuria is expected to begin on the 23rd of this month.

SKEFERIS

No. 31

Extract from the Statement made by the Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, in the House of Commons on April 13, 1939

". . . His Majesty's Government feel that they have both a duty and a service to perform by leaving no doubt in the mind of anybody as to their position. I therefore take this opportunity of saying on their behalf that His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to the avoidance of disturbance by force or threats of force of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula.

"Consequently they have come to the conclusion that in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece or Roumania, and which the Greek or Roumanian Government

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respectively considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek or Roumanian Government, as the case might be, all the support in their power.

"We are communicating this declaration to the Governments directly concerned and to others, especially Turkey, whose close relations with the Greek Government are known . . ."

No. 32

Extract from Statement made by the British Foreign Secretary, Viscount Halifax, in the House of Lords on April 13, 1939

". . . His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to the avoidance of disturbance by force or threat of force of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula.

"They have consequently come to the conclusion that in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece or Roumania, and which the Greek or Roumanian Government respectively considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek (or Roumanian) Government, as the case may be, all support in their power."

No. 33

Extract from the Statement issued to the Press on April 13, 1939, by the French Prime Minister, M. Daladier

". . . In view of the anxiety aroused in consequence of the events of the last few weeks, the French Government have given Roumania and Greece the special assurance that, in the event of action which would constitute a distinct threat to the independence of Roumania and Greece, and which the Roumanian or the Hellenic Government would regard themselves bound, as a matter of vital interest, to resist by the use of their national forces, the French Government would consider themselves under an obligation to afford at once all the help in their power . . ."

No. 34

The Vice-Consul at Santi Quaranta to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

(*After the resumption of telegraphic communication interrupted during seven days.*)

April 14, 1939

During the occupation of Santi Quaranta by an Italian expeditionary corps on the 7th of this month, the Consular building was shelled for three-quarters of an hour and was riddled with bullets. The Consular staff, Greek subjects and other Greeks were exposed to very serious danger. One person was slightly wounded. Italian marines entered the Vice-Consulate with fixed bayonets and Italian soldiers stored ammunition in the Consulate building. This was finally removed following my repeated protests to the Military Commandant.

BENSIS

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No. 35

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in London

April 14, 1939

I expressed to the British Minister my warmest thanks for yesterday's declarations by Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax. Kindly see the Foreign Secretary and assure him that the Royal Government and the Greek People appreciate to the utmost Great Britain's spontaneous and most generous gesture, which constitutes a new proof of her traditional friendship and sympathy towards Greece.

METAXAS

No. 36

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Paris

April 14, 1939

The French Minister has handed me the text of yesterday's declaration by M. Daladier. I expressed to him my warmest thanks and asked him to convey them to both the French Premier and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Kindly see MM. Daladier and Bonnier and point out that the Royal Government and the Greek People appreciate to the utmost France's spontaneous and generous gesture, which constitutes a new proof of her traditional friendship and sympathy towards Greece.

METAXAS

No. 37

The Minister in London to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 14, 1939

Yesterday I had a long interview with the German Chargé d'Affaires. He was in doubt as to the date when the Italian assurances were given us and was under the impression that they were given on April 7th or 8th. I explained that they were given on the 10th, following the interview which took place on the 9th between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Italian Chargé d'Affaires. I pointed out that we had asked neither for the British nor the French guarantee. He said he was glad that Greece had received a guarantee from both sides. He finally asked me for permission to transmit the above information to Berlin.

SIMOPOULOS

No. 38

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Tirana

April 15, 1939

Please take into consideration our earnest desire not to give ground for any misunderstanding. Your attitude towards the King of Italy's Delegate should be perfectly correct and friendly.

MAVROUDIS

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No. 39

The Minister in Beigrade to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 21, 1939

According to accurate information from an Albanian source, Signor Mussolini promised the Albanian Representatives, who went to Rome to offer the King of Italy the Albanian Crown, an extension of Albania's frontiers.

ROSETTIS

No. 40

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 27, 1939

The continued concentrations of Italian troops in Albania are causing much anxiety in diplomatic circles here, and the rumours of an impending Italian attack on Greece are gaining ground as the result of indiscretions by Italian officers. An Albanian Minister confidentially told the Dragoman of this Legation that, in the event of complications, Italy intended occupying at once the whole of Epirus as far as Preveza.

SKEFERIS

No. 41

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

May 12, 1939

A State banquet was given yesterday at the Quirinal in honour Their Royal Highnesses Prince Paul and Princess Olga of Yugoslavia. The guests included the Italian Premier, the Members of the Cabinet, other Italian persons of rank and all the Heads of the Diplomatic Missions in Rome. After dinner I had an opportunity of conversing for a short time with Signor Mussolini. The Italian Premier, with a preoccupied and somewhat aggrieved air, began by reminding me of the declaration recently made by him to the Greek Government with the object of putting a stop to certain unfounded rumours. "Your declaration," I hastened to observe, "has been deeply appreciated in Greece, as the Greek Premier stressed in his reply, and has made a most favourable impression on Greek public opinion." "In that case," Signor Mussolini replied, "what need was there for you to obtain a second declaration from M. Daladier?" I asked the Italian Premier if he meant the Anglo-French guarantees given both to Greece and Roumania some weeks ago.

At this point, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, who up to that moment had been following the conversation in silence, broke in and said that that was what the Duce meant, and that at the time the guarantee was given, its importance was stressed with special reference to Roumania, whereas the guarantee given to Greece was slurred over, and that, consequently, no particular importance had been attached to it. From this somewhat forced explanation of Count Ciano's I concluded that the Italian Premier was availing himself of the occasion in order to put to me the same question as he had put to the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs a few days ago.

The form in which the question was put, however, indicated that he

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regarded it as being to the point in view of yesterday's declaration by the French Premier before the French Chamber, which contained an express and definite mention of Greece as well as of the guarantee given her by France, promising immediate help in case of attack.

I reminded Signor Mussolini that the Anglo-French declarations, which were of a unilateral and friendly nature, had been made spontaneously and without being solicited, so that Greece could not do otherwise than accept them.

"The Italian Government," I added, "must certainly realize how difficult is the position of all small countries *vis-à-vis* of the Great Powers, and that Greece in particular has always desired to entertain friendly relations with all countries and especially with the Great Powers and her immediate neighbours. From the conversations I had with the Greek Prime Minister during my recent visit to Athens I gathered the clear impression that Greece's foreign policy is based and will continue to be based on the above principle."

Signor Mussolini listened attentively to these expressions of friendship towards his own country, but I cannot say that he appeared fully satisfied. At the moment of parting he said to me, with the air of a person who wishes to have the last word, and in words that were somewhat involved and cryptic, that "a country, in its political friendships, should know how to discriminate between its closer and its more remote friends."

P. METAXAS

No. 42

The Consul at Korytsa to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 15, 1939

The Italian Minister of Education, Signor Bottai, while on a visit to Korytsa yesterday, delivered a speech from the balcony of the Municipality, in which he pointed out that Albania, under her new régime, would, like Piedmont, expand her borders within two or three years.

TRINGHETAS

No. 43

The Minister in Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 25, 1939

I am informed that Marshal Badoglio assured an Albanian Delegation that Italy would devote herself to the organisation and prosperity of Albania as well as to the extension of her frontiers. The King's Delegate, at an Albanian meeting, also spoke of the creation of a greater Albania.

SKEFERIS

No. 44

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 6, 1939

I called yesterday evening upon the Minister for Foreign Affairs and, in accordance with your instructions, renewed to him His Majesty's condolences, adding my own, for the death of his father. I further expressed His Majesty's regret that, on account of his Excellency's

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mourning, His Majesty had been unable to meet him in Florence. Count Ciano merely thanked me, without so much as a word of reference to the happy event of H.R.H. Princess Irene's marriage. When I asked him what his views were on the evolution of the political situation, the Minister replied that, in contrast to the excitement prevailing elsewhere, the attitude of the Fascist Government and of Italian public opinion was calm and collected.

Taking advantage of the occasion, he criticized the (in his opinion) quite unjustified uneasiness and the menacing speeches of the British and French Premiers, as well as the alarmist articles of the Democratic Press. Count Ciano went on to condemn the Anglo-French policy of "encirclement," as shown by the liberal distribution all round of guarantees, a policy, he said, which was bound to be the starting point for a deterioration of the situation. He added that it was regrettable that Greece should have adhered to that policy by accepting the guarantee of the two Western Powers.

I did not fail to point out, once again, to the Italian Minister that the guarantee which the two Western Powers had given us at a moment of acute political crisis in Europe was of a purely general character and only applied to a would-be aggressor who might threaten our independence and integrity. It would have been difficult, I added, to refuse a guarantee offered to us in so disinterested and spontaneous a manner. The fact of having accepted it, however, did not in any way mean opposition on our part to Italy and Germany, with whom we sincerely desired to remain on most friendly terms.

P. METAXAS

No. 45

Memorandum of conversation between the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs with the Italian Minister, on August 21, 1939

I took advantage of Signor Grazzi's visit to-day, he having asked to see me immediately on his return from Italy, in order to clear up, as I explained to him, a certain question touching our relations with Italy. It was my intention to deal with it at some length, and I requested him not to take my words as actuated by any unfriendly disposition towards Italy:

In Italy there prevails a hostile feeling towards Greece, a feeling for which there is not a shadow of justification. We are accused of having participated in the Sanctions during the Abyssinian War. Yet we are not the only country to have done so, practically the whole of Europe having participated, including Yugoslavia, with whom Italy maintains the friendliest relations, and Bulgaria, whose territorial claims against us nevertheless receive the consistent support of the Italian press. Consequently no special blame can attach to Greece on account of the Sanctions, when Italy maintains such friendly relations with those two countries. To this Signor Grazzi replied that the question of Sanctions now belonged to the past and was regarded as no longer existent. I replied that this was certainly so, but that nevertheless it had a way of cropping up from time to time in the Italian papers.

I next brought the conversation round to the Dodecanese. I told him that we had no desire whatever to appear as interfering in the internal

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affairs of the Dodecanese, nevertheless we had always held that if the inhabitants of the Dodecanese were well treated, this would help to improve the relations between Greece and Italy. I had again and again had occasion to draw his predecessor's attention to this question, and Signor Boscarelli had frequently intervened with his Government, so much so that, for a moment, there had been a faint glimmer of hope that the state of things in the Dodecanese would improve. Instead of this, however, things had actually got worse, and to such an extent that there was a continual influx of Dodecanesians into Greece, they being unable to put up any longer with Italian oppression. I told Signor Grazzi that I did not wish to appear as making an official *démarche* on this question, but that it was up to them (i.e. the Italian Government) to realize that we already had here in Athens and the Piræus some 10,000 Dodecanesians, who were unceasingly bewailing the sufferings endured by their islands. However much we might forbid them, as we do, to voice their feelings in public, this could not prevent them from talking and from spreading among the population of Greece a spirit of deep resentment against Italy. Meanwhile the Italian papers, sometimes the one and sometimes the other, had never ceased publishing articles stating that Corfu belongs to Italy, on the ground that the island had been a Venetian possession for 400 years. With just as much right Turkey might lay claim to the whole of Greece. It was obvious that publications of this nature, when read here, were bound to annoy Greek public opinion.

As regards the Italian Government's complaints concerning the Treaty of Nyon, we would certainly have no objection to Italy's participating in the patrols provided for under that agreement. What we objected to was Italy's being given the right to use our ports. Of course, were the Italian fleet to come to our ports as visitors, we would be very glad to welcome them with all honours due, but only as visitors. What did *not* please us was that they should be *entitled* to use our harbours, especially in the case of Corfu—all the more so in view of the articles to which I had already referred—not so much because we were afraid lest the Italian Government might use this opportunity in order to occupy Corfu, as because of the public excitement which it would arouse and the consequent possibility of untoward incidents. For instance, it would be impossible for us to prevent incidents happening between the Italian sailors and the local population, as the latter would be sure to suspect that the use of Corfu harbour for the purposes of the Nyon Treaty was a preliminary to occupation. That is the reason why we had tried to avoid this question, not out of any hostile spirit towards the Italian Government, but, on the contrary, out of a desire to avoid any incident which might disturb our relations. Besides, this desire of ours not to have our harbours used had applied equally to other Powers, and, as a matter of fact, we had gradually succeeded in obtaining this. Consequently, I was unable to see on what grounds our attitude on this question could be treated by the Italian Government as gravely prejudicing the friendship between Italy and Greece.

Let us pass now to the present circumstances. We were accused of having accepted the guarantee of Great Britain and France, although this unilateral and spontaneously given guarantee applied generally to all cases of aggression against Greece. And yet the Rome Government

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had given a most warm and friendly reception to the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, whose country was exactly in the same position as ours. Was there any special reason as regards Greece? But, we are told, the Greek Government ought to have been satisfied with Signor Mussolini's assurances. And I ask you; the landing of troops in Albania began on Friday morning, and still we were without those assurances. On Saturday the advance into Albania continued, and still no assurances had been given us. On Easter Sunday the advance continued, and still no assurances. And it was only on Monday, at midday, that we received Signor Mussolini's assurances. It was obvious that the nervousness and the suspicions of public opinion during those days had become acute. Almost simultaneously with Signor Mussolini's assurances we received the guarantees from Great Britain and France. After receiving Signor Mussolini's assurances my own suspicions of Italy were allayed, but this was far from being the case as regards Greek public opinion. How then was it possible for me to refuse those guarantees? And on what grounds could I have offered such an affront to two Great Powers who, in a most friendly spirit and quite spontaneously, without asking us for anything in return, came and offered us their help in the event of our being attacked?

At this point the Minister objected that Italy alone was meant and that nobody else was likely to attack us. I replied that he was mistaken, because it was possible that we might be attacked by Bulgaria, in which case Great Britain and France would be under just the same obligation. "But," I added, "how do you expect us to persuade the Greek people to believe that they are in no danger from Italy, when the soldiers you send to the Dodecanese sing a special song: 'Sbarcheremo al Pireo e conquisteremo tutto l'Egeo, etc.'; when your officers and men every day talk openly of invading Greece; when General Badoglio makes a public speech in Albania about the extension of Albania's frontiers; when, on the occasion of Count Ciano's reception at Korytsa, boards were put up bearing, inscribed in black letters, the names of Kossovo and Tsamuria? Kossovo, as we know, belongs to Yugoslavia, with whom you have especially friendly relations, but Tsamuria is Greek."

Signor Grazzi was obviously feeling uncomfortable and the tone of his replies was very weak. But he put to me the following question: "Very well. But you are the allies of Turkey, and Turkey has made an alliance with Great Britain. In that case, how do you stand?" I replied that we had no treaty of alliance with Great Britain. To Turkey we were bound by the Balkan Pact and by our special treaties with Turkey, which were known to everyone. Not one of these Treaties was directed against Italy. He replied: "All right. But should Turkey attack Italy, what will you do?" I answered that Turkey had no intention of attacking Italy and that her alliance with Great Britain was purely defensive, for the purpose of resisting Italy, should the latter attack her. If, however, for argument's sake, we assumed that it might under any circumstances be possible for Turkey to attack Italy, in such a case we had no treaty-obligation to follow her. But, I repeated, such a contingency for me was inconceivable. At this he added: "All right. But should Great Britain put pressure on you to place your harbours at her disposal, what will you do?" "Great Britain," I replied, "has never suggested such a thing to us,

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neither at the time of last year's crisis nor during the crisis in April of this year, nor will she ever put pressure upon us in this question. Besides, should we of our own accord place our harbours at the disposal of the British, that would mean the abandonment of our neutrality and consequently war with you. But such a line of action is not in our minds and there is no need for us to consider it."

Then Signor Grazzi said to me: "So your intentions towards Italy are friendly? Do you authorize me to telegraph in this sense?" I replied that Greece had no intention of acting in a hostile manner towards Italy and of being involved in war against her, unless Italy should attack Greece's vital interests and, above all, the integrity of her territory. Signor Grazzi then protested, saying that Italy had no such intention and would never act in such a manner. "In such a case," I retorted, "why this hostility towards us? . . . I am fully aware, through the reports of our Minister in Rome, of Count Ciano's grievances against us, grievances which have absolutely no foundation whatsoever. Consequently, it means that there is a deep-seated prejudice against us. As regards Signor Mussolini, I still remember his fury on being informed that our Military Attaché in Belgrade had (so he had heard) expressed himself to a colleague disparagingly about the Italian army. I at once hastened to give Signor Mussolini satisfaction in the most flattering terms for the Italian army, and at the same time, notwithstanding the fact that the baselessness of the charge against our officer had been fully proved and certified to be baseless by the Italian Military Attaché in Belgrade, I nevertheless, in order not to leave a shadow of doubt in the mind of Signor Mussolini, after having done everything possible to give him satisfaction, had the officer in question placed on half-pay and refused to allow him to be given an appointment on the Staff, although perfectly innocent. That is how I act when I wish to preserve good relations with the Head of another country. But I cannot say the same of Signor Mussolini as regards his behaviour towards me.

"As you see," I added, "you treat us badly and that entitles us to think that your intentions towards us are anything but friendly." He protested and said that it would be enough were Italy convinced that Greece had no intention of acting in a hostile manner towards her for all this to stop.

Finally, I answered him as follows: "Allow me to have my doubts, although I pray it may be so with all my heart and do hope that you yourself will contribute to remove this unjust feeling of prejudice against Greece. However, I again repeat to you that, should an attack be made on the integrity of our territory, or should our vital interests be assailed, in that case we would fight to defend them."

He replied that, in that case, we should be quite right in doing so; but that there was no question of such a thing happening.

METAXAS

No. 46

Report of the Chief of the General Staff to the Prime Minister

August 29, 1939

The Italian Military Attaché, who has just returned from Italy, called on me to-day at his own request and asked me whether it was true that the forces in Western Macedonia and Epirus had lately been reinforced by individual calling-up notices. I replied in the affirmative and said

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that this step had been taken because, during the recent grand manœuvres of the Italian Army in Albania, nearly the whole of the Italian forces in Albania, with the exception of one Division, had been concentrated close to our frontier. I remarked that the sole object of the measure was to allay the alarm among the frontier populations, who were seriously disturbed at these unusual Italian concentrations.

The Italian Military Attaché then said that Italy had given us guarantees that she would respect our territorial integrity, consequently he was unable to explain why we had taken the above step. "I have been instructed," he added, "by the Minister of War, General Pariani, to repeat the assurances given."

I replied that I was very glad to receive this assurance from his Minister and that we in Greece desired nothing better than to maintain the friendliest relations with the Italians. The ostentatious concentration, however, of nearly the whole of the Italian forces in Albania, on the pretext of grand manœuvres, in immediate proximity to our frontiers, on the one hand, and, on the other, the constant violation of our territory during the last few months by Italian aircraft, which often penetrated to a great depth within our frontiers, unfortunately did not contribute to create that atmosphere which it was our desire and, as stated by him, that of his Minister also, to see prevail. But, in addition to this, the songs sung by the Italian soldiers did anything but contribute to restore mutual confidence.

He replied that he had no information about the concentration of Italian forces, on the pretext of grand manœuvres, close to our frontiers. I interrupted him with the remark that, if he so wished, I was in a position to give him detailed information.

He evaded giving any reply to the above. He then went on to discuss the question of the flight of Italian aircraft over our territory, and put them down to probable errors on the part of the pilots. I answered that I might have accepted this as an explanation if it had been a case of one or two flights only. I was quite unable, however, to admit that it was possible for the Italian pilots, who were well-known for their skill, to go on making these mistakes continuously over a period of two months, particularly when the flights in question often reached a depth of 25 kilometres and more within our territory.

To this he replied that very likely the Italian pilots who, as in all other countries, were young, high-spirited and perhaps slightly undisciplined, might have acted on their own initiative, without having such instructions from their superiors. I interrupted him to say that, as soon as these flights began, the Greek Government had protested in Rome through its Minister. "I feel sure," I added, "that had orders been issued by the Italian Command to its airmen forbidding such flights, the latter would not have persisted in their insubordination. I was quite sure, I said, that in an Air Force, like that of Italy, it was not possible for that which was the fundamental virtue in every armed force, namely, discipline, to be totally disregarded." I showed him a detailed list of the flights in question, giving the exact hours at which they had taken place, and the names of the districts over which they had flown. I also showed him copies of the songs sung by the Italian soldiers.

He was unable to make any reply to the above, but merely said that

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he would at once bring my remarks to the knowledge of his Government, and he repeated to me the assurances concerning the respect of our integrity, etc. "They are, however, afraid in Italy," he added, "that Greece will place naval bases at the disposal of Great Britain."

To this I replied that Italy need not fear any such thing, as Greece's one desire was not to be involved in the disputes between the Great Powers, and that, in any case, were Greece to do such a thing, I quite agreed that it would constitute a hostile act against Italy. All the steps, I repeated, which we have taken up to now, had been in the nature of counter-measures which the Greek Government had thought it expedient to take in view of the recent movements of Italian troops in Albania, for, although the Government's policy was to keep Greece out of the above disputes, they were nevertheless determined to defend, by all the means in their possession, the independence and integrity of the country. I assured him that the measures taken would be cancelled as soon as ever the causes which had given rise to them had disappeared.

He reiterated his promise to telegraph all that I had said to his Government.

I repeated the assurance that the measures would be cancelled as soon as the grounds for them had ceased, and that it was my earnest hope that the atmosphere of mutual confidence, which had been disturbed as a consequence of the manœuvres of the Italian Army in the vicinity of our frontiers, of the constant flights of Italian aircraft over our territory, of the songs which the Italian soldiers were allowed to sing, of the propaganda carried on in Albania in favour of Albanian territorial claims at our expense, of the anti-Greek articles in the Italian and Albanian press, of the hostile speeches made by various Italian officers, etc., would once again be restored.

PAPAGOS

No. 47

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

September 13, 1939

Following on my conversation with the Italian Minister on August 21, Signor Grazzi came to see me again after the outbreak of war. Speaking of his Government's declaration of non-billigerency, he hinted adroitly at a possible suspension in the concentration of Greek forces opposite Albania. I told him that the military steps taken by Greece were provoked by the concentrations of Italian troops in Albania, and more especially by those in the neighbourhood of our frontier where the main forces of the Italian Army in Albania were concentrated. Signor Grazzi inquired in a friendly manner whether I intended to relax the measures taken. I answered that I was quite ready to do so as soon as the Italian forces were removed from our frontiers and distributed throughout Albania.

The whole conversation was conducted in a friendly tone. I praised Signor Mussolini's efforts to prevent a conflict and the Italian Government's general behavour after the outbreak of hostilities, while M. Grazzi too expressed his warm desire for a closer understanding between our two countries.

Last Saturday, September 9, he called on me again and told me that he had been summoned to Rome by the Italian Minister for Foreign

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Affairs and was leaving immediately in order to report on his impressions of Greece. In view of the importance he seemed to attach to his trip to Rome, I surmise that, on his return, he will take up in a more concrete form the suggestions already made.

Immediately after his departure, I was informed from a reliable source that he had expressed the hope that he would soon come back bringing, as he said, proposals which would be highly profitable to both countries.

I am communicating the above for your guidance, and would be obliged if you would telegraph any information in connection with this question.

METAXAS

No. 48

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 13, 1939

During my visit to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Director-General, Signor Buti, confined himself to saying that Signor Grazzi had been instructed to make a communication on Signor Mussolini's behalf to the Prime Minister as soon as he returned to Athens.

P. METAXAS

No. 49

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

September 17, 1939

The Italian Minister, on his return from Rome, handed us the following communication from the Italian Government:

1. Italy has already declared on September 1st that she does not intend to take the initiative in resorting to military action of any kind.

2. The above decision of the Italian Cabinet, which is valid in a general sense, applies more especially to Greece.

3. Even in the event of Italy entering the war, a contingency which she, as a Great Power, cannot exclude, Italy will not take the initiative in resorting to any military action against Greece.

4. In order to give a more concrete form to the Italian Government's and especially the Duce's friendly feelings towards Greece, orders will be issued for the withdrawal of the Italian troops from the Greek frontier to a depth of 20 kilometres.

5. Notwithstanding the present situation, the Duce does not exclude the possibility of resuming and stabilizing the policy of an Italo-Greek entente, which had been previously established by special diplomatic agreements.

Rome, September 12, 1939.

MUSSOLINI

I replied that we would in due time reply to the last paragraph hinting at a renewal of the Greco-Italian Pact after a thorough study of the question which, under the present abnormal circumstances, would have to be exhaustive. As for the military measures referred to, we were very glad to receive his communication, including the assurance that Italy would in no case take up arms against Greece. We were at once proceeding to reduce our military forces in Epirus, Western Macedonia

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and Corfu. Furthermore, in deference to the desire of the Italian Government, we were ready to publish a joint *communiqué* concerning the withdrawal of the troops from both sides of the border. I handed Signor Grazzi the draft of the *communiqué* for despatch to Rome.

METAXAS

No. 50

Communiqué of the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs published in the afternoon of September 20, 1939

The Royal Government of Greece and the Royal Government of Italy have thought it expedient, in the present state of European affairs, to make a thorough examination of the mutual relations between the two countries. They are glad to be able to testify that these relations continue to be sincerely friendly and are inspired by a spirit of complete and mutual confidence.

Practical proof of these feelings has been given in the decision of the Italian Government to withdraw their military forces from the Greco-Albanian frontier and in the similar steps being taken by the Hellenic Government.

An identical *communiqué* is appearing in this afternoon's Italian papers.

No. 51

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 22, 1939

On the occasion of the publication of the joint Italo-Greek *communiqué* I thought it proper to ask Count Ciano for an audience. He received me the very same day in the evening and expressed in the most amiable terms his satisfaction that the relations between the two countries had been re-established on a friendly footing and that any misunderstanding had been removed. He declared that Italy had no aims either of an economic or a political nature directed against Greece. Her only desire was to see complete confidence and friendship prevailing in the relations between the two countries. He asked me to repeat the above to Your Excellency.

P. METAXAS

No. 52

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

September 30, 1939

The Italian Minister came to see me at my request. I handed to him the answer of the Royal Government to his previous communication made on behalf of the Italian Government. The answer runs as follows:

"The Royal Government have taken note of the communication made by the Italian Minister, acting on instructions from the Duce, to the Greek Premier on the 12th of this month, the terms of which they have greatly appreciated.

"The fresh assurances contained in the above communication, testifying to the friendly dispositions of Italy towards Greece, have caused the deepest satisfaction. These friendly dispositions correspond fully to Greece's feeling towards Italy and have created between the two

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countries an atmosphere of cordiality, which the Royal Government greatly appreciate. The Duce's spontaneous gesture in withdrawing the Italian troops from the Greek frontier has deeply moved Greek public opinion which has followed, with feelings of real sympathy, the Duce's attempts for the preservation of peace.

"In response to the Duce's friendly gesture, the Royal Government have at once proceeded to take similar military measures. The Royal Government wish to take advantage of the present opportunity in order to reaffirm their intention not to depart from the peaceful policy to which they are firmly devoted, as well as to express their sincere desire to see the beginning of a new period of friendship and understanding bearing the seal of complete mutual confidence between Italy and Greece.

"The Royal Government, who are firmly attached to their policy of peace, are fully convinced that this attachment is shared by the Italian Government. The former sincerely hope that the evolution of the international situation will make it possible for the two countries to give a more concrete form to their relations, with a view to their future co-operation in every field of activity in a spirit of complete confidence.

"In the meantime, the Royal Government are fully determined not to depart from the principles laid down in the Treaty of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement, signed at Rome, on September 23, 1928."

METAXAS

No. 53

Note on the conversation between the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Italian Minister, which took place on October 10, 1939

The Italian Minister called on me to-day and stated that his Government were completely satisfied by our note which was delivered to the Minister, and he requested only that this should take the form of a signed declaration. He said that he would reply to this also by a signed declaration, but that in accordance with his instructions, he would have previously to communicate this reply to his Government in order to obtain their approval. I thanked Signor Grazzi for this information and stated that we entirely agreed as regards the form, and that since no alteration was to be made to the text he could forthwith prepare his reply. When the Italian Minister went on to state with emphasis that the most interesting part of our memorandum was that which referred to the spirit of future Greco-Italian relations, I replied that not of lesser interest was the last point in which it was mentioned that we should proceed to renew the Agreement immediately circumstances permitted this, and that if we could not do so from now it was owing to the firm resolve of the Greek Government not to make the least departure from obligations they had assumed. The Italian Minister, realizing that I referred to Turkey, said that it would be highly desirable if Turkey followed our example. Reverting to the question of the exchange of declarations, he asked me if we agreed to their being published. I replied that in my opinion it would be preferable if we confined ourselves to the publication of a *communiqué*, unless he preferred a textual publication of the declarations. Our conversation continued, and the Italian Minister said to me in strict personal confidence

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that the Italian Government had decided to make public at a very early date and through official channels their intention of definitely remaining neutral. Thus, he added, if the Balkan States also maintained a similar attitude, we should avoid the disasters of a war. Signor Grazzi gave me to understand that the Italian Government had been led to the above decision in consequence of Russia's latest intervention and of her expansion in Eastern Europe. He said that the hard struggle which Italy had undertaken against communism in Spain was still fresh. Much Italian blood had been shed then, so that Italy could not see with an indifferent eye the interference of Bolshevik Russia in European affairs. From the entire conversation it was evident that the Italians feared Russian intervention as a potential menace to their own régime and in view of the danger of Slav expansion. Furthermore, Signor Grazzi asked if we had any information about the negotiations between Russia and Turkey, and added that Turkey was endeavouring to reconcile her obligations towards the Western Powers with her obligations towards Russia: he was very sceptical, particularly, as he said, in regard to a question such as that of the Dardanelles which in his opinion was the crux of the negotiations. He reverted to his previous statements, expressing the hope that Turkey would follow our example and reinforce the neutral front. I said that the point on which I could reassure him was that Turkey was glad to hear of our understanding which she considered to be beneficial in a more general way.

MAVROUDIS

No. 54

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

October 29, 1939

The Italian Minister, acting upon instructions from his Government, has suggested the following slight modification of the last paragraph of our answer to the Italian Government, to which we have agreed:

"The Royal Government are fully determined that their policy shall be inspired by the principles of friendship and co-operation, such as were proclaimed in the Pact of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement between Greece and Italy, signed at Rome on September 23, 1928."

The signature of the communications exchanged took place yesterday, but under date September 30. At the request of the Italian Government, the text will be published towards the middle of next week.

METAXAS

No. 55

Text of letters exchanged on September 30, 1939, and published on November 3, 1939

1. Letter of the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Italian Minister.

Athens, September 30, 1939

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE,

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that the Royal Government have noted the communication, which on the instructions of the

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Duce you were pleased to make to me on the 12th inst., and the spirit of which the Government have greatly appreciated.

The assurances contained in this communication, which bear witness to the amicable intentions of Italy towards Greece, have been received with profound satisfaction. These amicable intentions, which are fully reciprocated by Greece towards Italy, have created between the two countries an atmosphere of cordiality which is particularly pleasing to the Government.

The spontaneous act of the Duce in removing the Italian forces from the Greco-Albanian border has profoundly moved the Greek people, who note with feelings of sympathy the Duce's efforts to maintain peace.

The Royal Government are particularly appreciative of the sentiments which have inspired this act and have hastened to order similar military measures.

The Royal Government are glad to avail themselves of this occasion to reaffirm their intention of maintaining a policy of peace to which they are profoundly attached, and of their sincere desire to enter upon a new period of amity and good understanding between Italy and Greece which will be marked by the greatest mutual confidence.

The Hellenic Government, acting on this policy and in the conviction that the Italian Government fully associate themselves therewith, firmly hope that the development of the international situation will, in the near future, afford the two Governments an opportunity of giving to their relations a more tangible form, in view of a fruitful and loyal co-operation on all matters.

In the meantime, the Hellenic Government are resolved to be guided by the principles of friendship and co-operation proclaimed in the Pact of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement, signed between Italy and Greece in Rome on September 23, 1928.

Please accept, Monsieur le Ministre, the assurance of my high consideration.

J. METAXAS

2. The reply of the Italian Minister to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Athens, September 30, 1939

MONSIEUR LE PRÉSIDENT,

By a declaration under to-day's date, Your Excellency has been pleased to inform me that the Hellenic Government are glad to avail themselves of the occasion offered by the atmosphere of cordiality which exists between the two countries, which they are particularly happy to note, in order to reaffirm their intention of maintaining a policy of peace to which they are profoundly attached, and further that your Government sincerely desire to enter upon a new period of friendship and good understanding between Greece and Italy marked by the greatest mutual confidence.

At the same time, Your Excellency has been pleased to inform me that the Hellenic Government, being guided by this policy and having the conviction that the Italian Government entirely associate themselves therewith, entertain the firm hope that the development of the inter-

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national situation will in the near future afford the two Governments an opportunity of giving to their relations a more tangible form in view of a fruitful and loyal co-operation on all matters, and that in the meantime the Hellenic Government are resolved to be guided by the principles of friendship and co-operation contained in the Pact of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement, signed between Greece and Italy in Rome on September 23, 1928.

Acting on the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that Italy is guided by the same sentiments towards Greece and shares her intention of continuing a policy of peace, to which she is profoundly attached, and of her sincere desire to enter upon a new period of amity and good understanding between Greece and Italy marked by the greatest mutual confidence.

The Royal Italian Government also express the firm hope that the development of the international situation will in the near future afford the two Governments an opportunity of giving to their relations a more tangible form, in view of a fruitful and loyal co-operation on all matters.

In the meantime, the Royal Italian Government are resolved to be guided by the principles of friendship and co-operation proclaimed in the Pact of Friendship, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement, signed between Greece and Italy in Rome on September 23, 1928.

Please accept, Monsieur le Président, the expression of my highest consideration.

R. GRAZZI

No. 56

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

March 21, 1940

I asked Count Ciano in what sense the Balkans had been the subject of conversation at Brenner between Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. At first he denied that any mention of the Balkans was made, but when I hinted that I had confirmation of this from a different source, he told me that, among other subjects, the Balkans were discussed *en passant* and that the policy of safeguarding peace in that area remained unchanged. He added that we must not attach any extraordinary importance to the recent meetings, as meetings of this kind were nothing more than the normal routine for the discussion of the internal affairs of the Axis. I next inquired whether there was any probability of Russia, at the conclusion of the Finnish enterprise, again raising questions affecting the South East of Europe—for instance, the question of Bessarabia.—"You know," he said, "that our relations with the Soviets are not of such a nature as to enable me to know their intentions. Germany has assured me that such a danger does not exist."

I mentioned a rumour of an impending *rapprochement* between Italy and the Soviets. To that he opposed a formal denial.

Summing up, he said that, although we were living in an age of frequent changes, he was not at all anxious about the Balkans in the present state of affairs.

J. POLITIS

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No. 57

Memorandum concerning the conversation of the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs with the Italian Minister

March 29, 1940

I handed the Italian Minister a memorandum containing information concerning moves of Albanian bands in the vicinity of our frontiers with a view to eventual action in Greek territory. I drew his attention to the desirability of suppressing any such tendencies, as being liable to disturb the existing friendly relations between the two countries.

MAVROUDIS

No. 58

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 11, 1940

A foreign colleague assured me that, in Vatican circles, there were rumours of an impending *coup* against Corfu. Similar rumours were going about at the Press Club. By a curious coincidence, our Consuls at Trieste and Brindisi both report the same thing.

There appears to be some relation between these rumours and the report, emanating from a first-rate source, according to which the Italian Government intends to react against the British naval patrols in the Adriatic by declaring it a *mare clausum*.

In any case, in view of the guarantee given by Britain and France, any Italian enterprise against Corfu would mean the entry of Italy into the war against the Western Powers. There are no visible signs of any such intention on her part, unless Italy wishes to take advantage of the complications in the North of Europe in order to risk her all.

J. POLITIS

No. 59

The Representative in Geneva to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 12, 1940

I am informed from a good source that, in Vatican circles, a rumour is current of imminent Italian military action against Salonica.

M. MELAS

No. 60

The Minister in Sofia to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 12, 1940

I beg to inform you that there were rumours here yesterday of an impending occupation of Corfu by the Italians.

PIPINELLIS

No. 61

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 13, 1940

The rumours about Corfu continue to gain ground. Similar information has also reached me from Florence. The British Chargé d'Affaires

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has received the same information from his Consuls. Crete and the Ægean Islands are also mentioned as objectives, in addition to Corfu. Examining the situation from a logical point of view, I find it difficult to believe that these rumours will materialize, although the political atmosphere has become charged with suspicion since the rapid development of events in the North of Europe.

A favourable turn of events for Germany may have a decisive influence on Italian dispositions.

In any case, a discreet vigilance is more than ever necessary.

J. POLITIS

No. 62

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

April 13, 1940

The following is an account of the origin of the information which has been circulating here with surprising insistence to the effect that Italy is contemplating the occupation of Corfu.

Some days ago our consuls at Trieste and Brindisi almost simultaneously advised us that information was current there that military action was imminent against Greece, and more particularly against Corfu. Immediately after, several friendly colleagues began coming in to me with similar information—some of these affirmed that this information was current in military circles. Our Military Attaché also received visits from colleagues with the same object. I called upon the Ambassador of a Great Power in order to inquire if he had heard anything in this connexion, and found him holding a paper reporting that the Vatican had information that the occupation of Corfu was imminent. On the following day I received a letter from a Greek in Florence, asking for a visa, as it was said there that an offensive against us was impending. Yesterday afternoon I visited the British Chargé d'Affaires who had also received cables to similar effect from certain British Consuls, among whom were the Consuls at Palermo and Naples. The latter mentioned Corfu or Crete or the islands of the Ægean among the objectives aimed at, and added in this connexion that certain ships in the port of Naples had left for Taranto. In the meantime, this information has reached the man in the street, and it can be said that there is no part of Italy in which it has not been heard. The question now arises: where is the source of this lightning rumour? In my view it is not merely an idea which has emanated from the usual discussions on politics and military affairs which take place in cafés or at social gatherings. Public opinion in Italy is divided: there are enthusiastic Fascists and silent reactionaries. If the overheated megalomania of the Fascists wanted to invent something sensational, it would not have picked upon Corfu, which in itself is of doubtful utility, but would rather have turned to other objectives to which slogans in the past have drawn attention. The other section of public opinion, which takes a pessimistic and defeatist attitude towards Fascist war fever, would naturally look to the points from which its real causes of anxiety arise. Moreover, in view of the fact that, as I have been assured by many of my colleagues, this information was current in military circles, it is more natural to accept that it emanated from those circles

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and finally leaked out to the man in the street than to suppose the reverse. Nor is it possible to imagine information from a private source spreading out at once all over Italy. I believe that it should rather be attributed to political or military inspiration. Another question then arises: as to whether the matter has at any time been seriously considered or whether it is a mere rumour deliberately spread from high quarters for a purpose, and if so, for what purpose?

The occupation of Corfu cannot be thought of as a self-contained objective. In view of Italy's present position in Albania, Corfu is not indispensable to her security in the Adriatic. On the other hand, Italy knows that we would defend ourselves against any such attack. Your Excellency has indeed removed every doubt as regards this. Italy also knows that our defence would automatically, by virtue of the guarantee given, entail the intervention of the Western Powers. Even to-day I have reliable information that the British Military Attaché has reminded the Italian High Command of this. In view of the foregoing, any intention of occupying Corfu cannot be considered except as one element in a more extensive decision on the part of Italy to enter the war.

J. POLITIS

No. 63

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

April 13, 1940

Before I had time to summon the Italian Minister in order to draw his attention to the reports concerning Italian intentions against Corfu, he himself asked to see me on the ground that he was shortly leaving for Rome. He referred at once to the rumours circulating here, and stressed his Government's friendly dispositions towards Greece. He observed that such rumours were entirely unjustified, and said that English intrigue was at the bottom of them, because Great Britain looked upon Italo-Greek friendship with hostility and was trying, by all the means in her power, to sow suspicion in the relations between the two countries.

I answered that I had no doubt whatsoever about the friendly dispositions of Italy, but that, as far as the Corfu rumours circulating in Athens were concerned, although I myself knew them to be unfounded, they were a mere echo of those current in Italy—in Vatican circles and at the Press Club—as well as in various foreign countries—in Bulgaria, for instance, and Switzerland. Under the circumstances it was only natural that such rumours should cause a certain nervousness in Greek public opinion, to the prejudice of our mutual interests. As far as Great Britain was concerned, I firmly assured Signor Grazzi that the British Government had been unfailing in recommending the improvement of our relations with Italy, and I stressed the real satisfaction shown by England and France at the time of the exchange of Notes between Greece and Italy last October. The Italian Minister insisted that the British Government were insincere. In answer to my objection that Greece was too small a country to arouse such rivalries, he remarked that our geographical position was of enormous importance both to Great Britain and to Italy.

METAXAS

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No. 64

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

May 11, 1940

The Italian Minister returned from Rome after a short leave and called on me on the 3rd inst. He said that he was aware of different rumours concerning hostile Italian dispositions towards Greece, but he had never imagined they would be taken seriously by us. He was anxious to impart to me the impressions he had gathered during his stay in Rome, and stated that Italy was not at all inclined, at any rate for the present, to be involved in the war. As far as the Balkans were concerned, her desire was that peace should on no account be disturbed. Of course, it would be quite a different thing should a third party start any kind of military initiative. In that case, Italy would be forced to defend herself.

In the course of his visit to the Prime Minister on the 6th, Signor Grazzi repeated the above, adding that "Italy, as a Great Power, has her own claims, which she will put forward in due time, but she is prepared to give the assurance that the claims in question do not concern either Greece or the Balkans generally. Should Italy be involved in war against Great Britain, she would not attack Greece, provided the latter was not converted into a British base."

MAVROUDIS

No. 65

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

May 15, 1940

The assurances given you by the Italian Minister contain certain reservations which render those assurances nugatory. I am convinced that, should Italy enter the war, she will pursue, notwithstanding all declarations to the contrary, the policy of springing surprises.

J. POLITIS

No. 66

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

May 29, 1940

The Under-Secretary of the Fascist University Organisation, Signor Guido Fallotta, in a proclamation addressed to the students who took part in the Turin University sports, among other things, makes the following statement: "Turin will be the starting-point of our final War of Liberation, the war which is destined to break the chains still binding our country, the war that is going to throw open at last the gates of Suez and Gibraltar and will restore to us the Mediterranean which was once ours. The hour of reckoning is at hand for the senile plutocratic countries which thought they were going to condemn us to starvation and intimidate us with their fleets. The great Recorder is making ready for the final reckoning, and will demand payment in full of the bills drawn in London and Paris in 1915, as well as the settlement of those other accounts in Tunis, Nice, Corfu, Djibouti and elsewhere. The payment is due soon, with interest."

Signor Fallotta's proclamation, which is published under sensational

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headings by the whole Italian Press, concludes: "Comrades of all the Italian Universities, good-bye till we meet again in sportsmanlike rivalry on the field of battle."

J. POLITIS

No. 67

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

May 26, 1940

1. The mobilisation, in the widest sense of preparing the country for a state of war, is proceeding systematically. The summoning of reservists by individual calling-up notices continues. The schools have been ordered to close down at the end of this month, and the University on the 10th of June. Blue lamps have been placed in every street. Ships have put off their sailings. A well-informed foreign military attaché assured me that the existing preparations are sufficient to enable Italy to enter the war; the rest can be completed after the beginning of military operations.

2. The German victories continue to be magnified with an emphasis and in a tone of triumph which, even if it were a question of Italian victories, could not be greater.

3. Government propaganda intended to influence public opinion continues. The latter is artificially represented as being full of war-like enthusiasm and as straining at the leash. Speeches from the leaders to the people, loyal addresses from the people to the chiefs vie with each other in bellicose spirit and pompous phrases announcing that the Italian bomb is about to burst.

4. The Fascist agents have been instructed as to the part each one has to play. Side by side with scurrilous posters attacking England, placards have been set up bearing the words: "Corsica Italiana." Balbo's paper has started a campaign against Egypt. Signor Gayda devotes his attention to the Balkans, first magnifying their military importance, from Dalmatia to Crete, and then complaining that those countries are being used as bases for the British blockade. Count Ciano has undertaken to cultivate Albanian Irredentist claims to Tsamuria and Kossovo. Other Fascist manifestoes stake out future claims to Tunis, Gibraltar and Corfu. In other words, it is being proclaimed that the storm is brewing and that all is ready.

But this is merely the façade. What is going on beneath the surface can only be approximately described. Public opinion, cowed and timid, fatalistically awaits the Duce's signal like a kind of death-knell. The Duce, on the other hand, perfectly aware of the public's state of mind, is anxiously following the great battle in Flanders and awaiting his opportunity to score an easy victory. If and when the signal will be given, will depend entirely upon the fortunes of the German arms. In which direction he will strike first is a riddle which still remains unanswered. No declaration, no assurance, no threat of any kind can be regarded as giving a clue to its solution.

In conclusion, as far as Italy's final decision is concerned, doubts and fears are equally justified. The course of the battle being fought out in Flanders will ultimately determine Italian policy.

J. POLITIS

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No. 68

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

May 29, 1940

The *Giornale d'Italia* publishes to-day a message from its Athens correspondent under the heading "Greece's Youth and the present political situation."

The correspondent states that, having lately had the occasion to attend a parade of groups belonging to the Greek National Youth Organisation, he was struck by their general lack of youthful enthusiasm, so that they hardly seemed to be members of a youth organisation at all.

The lack, he goes on to say, of a revolutionary movement capable of evolving a new set of moral values means that not only the Youth movement, but the whole "Régime of the 4th of August," is totally devoid of an ideological basis, failing which the present attempt at a National Revival must be regarded as founded upon sand.

The reason for this, according to the Italian correspondent, is that, notwithstanding the *coup d'état* of August 4th, the entire country continues to be under the domination of the Freemasons against whom the present régime has not dared to lift a finger, as many of the present leaders are Masons. Freemasonry in Greece is closely linked up with British and French capitalism. But, he says, from now onwards the victories of Germany are beginning to hold out to Greece's Youth prospects of a New Order, in which a place is reserved for them.

J. POLITIS

No. 69

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 1, 1940

To-day's *Popolo di Roma* and the *Stampa* of Turin publish an article from their Athens correspondent who, amongst other things, writes:

"In Greek waters, among the islands and bays, British warships move freely to and fro. But, besides warships, there is also British gold. There, in a nutshell, you have the policy of Greece, a country that is poor, a country that depends for its existence solely on the sea. The day another flag replaces that of Britain in the mastery of the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece will become the vassal of that new flag, just as, in past centuries, she was the vassal of the Crescent. One thing is clear, that, among the flags of the various nations, Greek sympathy leans to the side of the richest, in other words, to the side of the flag which represents the Empire of the "Almighty Pound Sterling." The Greeks have not yet got used to the idea of an Eastern Mediterranean and Ægean Sea freed from the overlordship of a foreign Power or a foreign currency, however much such a freedom ought to be one of Greece's national goals. . . .

"The existence of the Greek Nation depends, as we have said, on the sea, but to-day, that is since last Easter, Greece has to face, besides the old sea-problem, a fresh land-problem, owing to the fact that, for the first time in her history, she now has a common land-frontier with a Great Power. That is why M. Metaxas to-day has to divide his anxious attention between the sea and the land. However true it may be that Greece,

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nolens volens, is bound to be friends with the Power that rules the sea, she must equally, in the opinion of Greece's present rulers, maintain friendly relations with her powerful neighbour in the Balkans. Were unison to be established between the two Powers in question, the dilemma in which Greece finds herself as between sea- and land-power would be solved to the benefit of her independence. If, on the other hand, things continue as at present, Greece will have to go on living in the same atmosphere of alarm and strain which, during the last few days, has become acute.

"In her bewilderment and her desire to escape from danger—a danger largely imaginary and the invention of foreign propaganda—Greece holds out imploring hands towards Asia, towards those who for centuries have been her enemies. The Greeks of 1940 are appealing to the Turks as allies and, eventually, as liberators and saviours! What a tremendous reversal of history and spiritual values! The Greek Cross calling the Crescent to the rescue! As for the Turk, he has not denied his help to those who, for centuries, have despised and spurned him. Entangled in the schemes of the Democracies and spurred on in part by their gold, Turkey puts her sword at Greece's disposal under certain conditions or, rather, she promises to do so. The following is the formula: Turkey looks on Greece as forming part of her own 'safety-zone' and, in accordance with the terms of the Anglo-Turkish Pact concluded during the period of democratic optimism, Turkey has bound herself to take up arms against any Power that commits an act of aggression against her own territory or her 'safety-zone.' One wonders whether recent events on the Western Front and the military collapse of the Democratic Powers have induced the 'canny' Turk to alter his tone and to come to more prudent decisions. We think so. In any case, there is one point we should like to make, namely, that in accepting this guarantee from Turkey as partner of the other two guarantors, Great Britain and France, Greece emerges with her honour as a sovereign state diminished and with all the appearance of having become a protectorate, and what is more, a Turkish protectorate!

"Are we really to see Greece reduced to the status of a Turkish protectorate—we can take it for granted that she relies far more on Turkey's military aid than on that of the Western Powers—a protectorate that will have as its consequence to bring back the Turks into Europe and once more give Moslem Asia authority over the Christian Cross, even if that Cross be only Greek?

"The Greeks applaud, without perhaps being conscious of what they are doing."

J. POLITIS

No. 70

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 2, 1940

I feel it my duty to convey to you my uneasiness, in view of recent Italian press-messages and reports directed against Greece which represent her as the plaything of foreign intrigues and Greek sovereignty as being already seriously impaired.

It is significant that this should be happening just at the moment when

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Italy is on the point of intervening in the war. In this respect Greece has now taken the place of Yugoslavia, who for some time has ceased being the target for calumnies of this sort.

It is obvious that, in the eyes of Italy, Greece appears to be a field open to prospective Italian military ventures. It is with a view to such an eventuality that the Italian Press are already preparing the ground for a violation of Greek sovereignty, should this be found necessary or expedient later on.

J. POLITIS

No. 71

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 3, 1940

A characteristic symptom of the mentality being fostered here is to be found in the manifesto distributed and posted up in Rome and other Italian cities by the Nationalist Organization "Opera Azzurra." The manifesto contains the following passages in the form of slogans:

"The only way of ensuring permanent Peace in Europe: the big to swallow up the small."

"In virtue of indisputable historical rights and by right of superior force, Central and Southern France, the Mediterranean basin, the Adriatic, Croatia, Dalmatia, Greece, Cyprus, Albania and Jerusalem belong to Italy."

J. POLITIS

No. 72

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 3, 1940

Our Consul-General at Genoa telegraphs as follows:

"In addition to the official proclamations, various persons started posting up yesterday, under the very eyes of the authorities, handwritten tracts full of insults and threats against the Western Powers. Among the Italian claims enumerated figure the names of Corfu and Cyprus. Agents from the Fascist Headquarters go about collecting bands of unemployed and vagabonds for the purpose of organizing noisy demonstrations. From the same source emanate various rumours concerning the projected occupation of Corsica, Malta, Tunis and Egypt, as well as the impending march of the Italian forces in Albania towards Salonica."

J. POLITIS

No. 73

The Minister in Washington to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 7, 1940

The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Welles, has informed me that Italy is expected to enter the war in the course of the next few days—within a week at the utmost. The assurances given yesterday by Count Ciano to the Ministers of Greece and Yugoslavia that Italy will respect those two countries and will attack France are regarded here as sincere, when taken in connexion with the attitude of Soviet Russia towards the Balkans.

K. DIAMANTOPOULOS

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No. 74

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Washington

June 8, 1940

Please inform the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that it is not true that Count Ciano yesterday gave our Minister in Rome fresh assurances that Italy would respect the integrity of Greece. Apart from the assurances already given us by Count Ciano and the Italian Minister in Athens, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs has not given M. Politis any fresh assurances of the above nature.

MAVROUDIS

No. 75

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 8, 1940

I am informed from a trustworthy source that the Press have received instructions from the Ministry of Popular Culture to develop the following themes:

1. In Greece the leaders, being Masons, are in favour of the Western Powers, whereas the people and especially the Youth are for the Axis.
2. As the Allies together with Turkey intend to occupy the islands and Salonica, Italy will have to undertake the defence of Greece.
3. Greek public opinion, wearied with constant British and French interference, longs for the protection of Italy.

It is noteworthy that, since the day before yesterday, the Press has ceased commenting on Greek affairs. The warning from Soviet Russia may be the cause.

J. POLITIS

No. 76

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 10, 1940

The Minister for Foreign Affairs assured me that Italy had decided to enter the war and gave me to understand that this decision would be at once put into effect. I enquired whether I might rely on the assurances recently given by Italy to my Government that this will have no repercussions on the Balkans and more especially Greece. He replied that I might rest assured that he adhered to all his previous declarations, and that it was Italy's firm intention that peace should not be disturbed in the Balkans. He added that Italy had given similar assurances both to Yugoslavia and Turkey, and that she had no reason whatever for attacking the latter, unless Turkey herself were to alter her attitude. As regards Yugoslavia, he made a special point of declaring that, at that country's own request, the assurances given her had been more than usually explicit.

J. POLITIS

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PART II

ITALIAN PROVOCATIONS

(JUNE 10—OCTOBER 28, 1940)

Documents Nos. 77 to 177

FIRST PERIOD—
(June 10—August 11, 1940)—

Documents Nos. 77-110

No. 77

Extract from Signor Mussolini's Speech to the Italian People on the afternoon (6 p.m.) of June 10, 1940, day of the Declaration of War against Great Britain and France

". . . Now that the die has been cast and that, by our own will, the bridges behind us have been burnt, I solemnly declare that Italy has no intention of dragging into the conflict other nations who are her neighbours by sea or by land. Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey and Egypt should take note of these words. On them and only on them it depends whether these promises shall be maintained or not . . ."

No. 78

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Rome

June 11, 1940

The Italian Minister enquired of me to-day what would be the attitude of Greece towards Italy now that the latter was a belligerent. I replied that we should continue to remain absolutely neutral as long as the war did not spread to the Balkans. Kindly give a similar assurance, should the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs put the same question to you.

METAXAS

No. 79

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 18, 1940

I received an urgent summons from the substitute of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is at present on leave, asking me to come and see him. He informed me that the Italian Government possessed conclusive evidence to the effect that a British aircraft-carrier, in addition to several cruisers and destroyers, had remained in Cretan waters longer than the legal twenty-four hour limit. This, he said, constituted a violation of

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Greece's sovereignty and neutrality, which he supposed Greece was determined to maintain in accordance with the promises and declarations she had made. I replied that there could be no question of the Hellenic Government's intentions. As for the facts complained of, I was not in a position to offer any explanation, prior to hearing from my Government what were the true facts. I enquired whether the presence of warships in our waters for several days had been established beyond doubt and whether he could give me more precise information about these vessels. The only answer vouchsafed was that the Italian Government were sure of their facts and that the warships in question had remained longer than the legal twenty-four hours.

The Italian Minister in Athens has been instructed to make a similar protest.

J. POLITIS

No. 80

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Rome

June 18, 1940

Please inform urgently the Italian Government that the report about the presence of British warships in Cretan territorial waters is absolutely false. Not a single British war vessel has entered a Cretan port; not a single British warship of any description has even been signalled within the range of visibility from the shore. As regards Greece's neutrality, please declare in the most formal manner that the Royal Government adhere to it and are determined to observe it in the strictest fashion as well as to protect Greek sovereignty.

Similar assurances have been given by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the First Secretary of the Italian Legation, who had made similar representations, and by the Chief of the Naval Staff to the Italian Naval Attaché, who called to see him on the same subject.

METAXAS

No. 81

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 19, 1940

In the absence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs I saw his substitute, to whom I read a memorandum containing your formal *démenti*. He replied that he had already received our answer, as communicated through the First Secretary of the Italian Legation in Athens, and recognised that no question existed.

I expressed my surprise that such a question should have arisen at all. I could understand, I said, a misunderstanding arising, if, in lieu of a single ship, the Italian Navy had spotted several, or if a warship had actually touched at one of our ports and there had been a misunderstanding about the length of her stay. But it seemed to me very strange that such an allegation should be made without the smallest foundation and that details should be given indicating the class of vessel, etc., even if one made allowances for the natural nervousness of the military authorities in time of war. He replied that he shared my astonishment, and added

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that the information had been supplied by their reconnaissance planes. He telephoned in my presence to military headquarters and drew their attention to the matter, adding that their incorrect information had been the cause of my being troubled. Finally, he thanked me and expressed himself fully satisfied. The conversation was of an entirely cordial character.

J. POLITIS

No. 82

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 19, 1940

Supplementing my previous despatches, I have the honour to report certain details of the *démarche* made to me.

Yesterday, at about 10 a.m., I was asked by telephone whether I could call immediately on Signor Anfuso about an urgent matter.

Signor Anfuso, who has the rank of Minister, is Count Ciano's *Chef de Cabinet*, and represents Count Ciano when the latter is absent from Rome. It should be noted that Count Ciano has assumed the command of certain air forces, but still retains the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. At a recent interview I had with him, he told me that he would divide his time between the Ministry and the front.

When I arrived, Signor Anfuso was holding a telegram which he had just sent to Signor Grazzi. He told me, with a stern air, that the Italian Admiralty had ascertained on reliable information that one aircraft-carrier, some cruisers and some destroyers were in Cretan ports and more particularly at Suda Bay and Candia, and that their stay there had been protracted for a period considerably exceeding 24 hours. He then emphasized the vital importance of this matter for belligerent Italy, in view of the strategic position of Crete, and referring to the international rule, said that its contravention was incompatible with the repeated statements and promises of the Greek Government to maintain strict neutrality and to protect their soveriegnty. I immediately asked Signor Anfuso whether he could tell me when the ships had been seen there and in what manner it had been ascertained that they had in fact been in port for more than 24 hours. Apparently he thought that this was a sort of counter-attack on my part and he explained that the Navy had means of ascertaining the presence of ships without violating our neutrality. I remarked that this was not the question, but that in the interests of the matter and in order to facilitate investigation I desired to have more definite data, as the information, apart from the mention of the aircraft-carrier, appeared to me to be somewhat vague. Although I repeatedly formulated this desire, both Signor Anfuso and an Admiral, who was in the meantime called in, avoided giving a reply, but emphasized that they could assure me they were certain of their allegations.

I then told the Minister's *Chef de Cabinet* that as regards the intentions of my Government to impose respect of the country's neutrality and of its sovereign rights, I could not consider them open to discussion, while as regards the events denounced I was not in a position to discuss them before obtaining information from the Royal Government to which I would address myself.

Very early this morning I called on Signor Anfuso with a memorandum

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containing the substance of your telegram. He anticipated me by saying in a friendly tone that he guessed the object of my visit, because he had already received a cable from Signor Grazzi transmitting your assurances that the information was inaccurate and therefore, he said, no question existed. Nevertheless I read the memorandum to Signor Anfuso and requested him in turn to note that the matter now presented another aspect in which we were interested as much as the Italian Government; he would therefore allow me to express my surprise at the way in which the Italian Admiralty, without any foundation, had been so positive about the presence of an entire fleet and especially about the length of its stay. I said I knew that the military authorities were apt to get somewhat excited in war-time, and for this reason I should not have been surprised if two ships had been seen and I had been told that there were ten; or if they had stayed in port ten hours and I had been told that they remained thirty hours. But in this case there was not an atom of fact to support the accusation. Signor Anfuso admitted that the matter was surprising and stated that the information had been given by reconnaissance aircraft; he thus in a manner attributed the misunderstanding to an error or carelessness on their part. Furthermore, he telephoned to the Admiral who had acted as liaison officer and pointed out to him that the attention of the proper services should be drawn to this matter, "because, he said, on the basis of the information given I troubled the Greek Minister, and it now appears that there was not the shadow of a foundation for the information in question." He then turned to me and said that in any case he was very glad that no question existed.

J. POLITIS

No. 83

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 19, 1940

The *Piccolo* a few days back published a short explanatory article giving the historical grounds on which Victor Emmanuel III is styled King of Cyprus and Jerusalem.

Secondly, the review *Conquisto d'Impero* publishes in its last number a map of the Italian Empire, in which it includes, *inter alia*, Corfu, Crete and Cyprus.

J. POLITIS

No. 84

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 26, 1940

Signor Anfuso, Principal Private Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, asked me to come and see him to-day. He bluntly informed me that the Greek Minister in Ankara was intriguing against the Axis in direct opposition to Your Excellency's own policy and he gave me to understand that, in order to remove all misunderstandings, it would be as well if he was recalled. I observed that it was not possible that so experienced a diplomat as our Minister in Ankara should act in a spirit contrary to the instructions of his Government, and that the Government's policy was free from all ambiguity. Besides, I was unable to see what means the

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Minister in question had of intriguing against the Axis. I expressed my dissatisfaction at the vagueness of the charge and insisted on some more concrete explanation. Signor Anfuso, however, again replied in vague terms that all the activities of the Greek Minister in Ankara were directed against the Axis.

I told him I would refer the matter to Your Excellency, without, however, concealing my opinion that I considered the charge extremely slender.

J. POLITIS

No. 85

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

June 26, 1940

We are greatly surprised at Signor Anfuso's communication. We have not the slightest doubt that the whole affair is the result of an intrigue by persons who desire to make mischief between ourselves and Italy at the very moment when the relations between our two countries are of the most cordial nature. As you very rightly pointed out, our Representative in Ankara is an experienced Minister and he would be quite incapable of pursuing a purely personal policy opposed to the clearly defined policy of the Royal Government who have been unremitting in their absolute sincerity towards Italy. It is to be noted that our Minister was always in very close contact with the present Italian Minister's predecessor, Signor Galli, with whom he was on terms of the greatest cordiality, although at that time Greco-Italian relations were not yet on such a friendly footing as they are to-day.

MAVROUDIS

No. 86

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

June 30, 1940

The Foreign Minister read me a telegram from the Italian Ambassador at Ankara in which the latter insisted on his previous information about his Greek colleague's speaking against the Axis and expressing pessimistic views about its future. I realized that the charge did not amount to more than that, and made it clear to Count Ciano that the only conclusion it was possible to draw from the telegram he had read me was that the Italian Ambassador's opinion was based not on his own personal knowledge but on second-hand information. This made me all the more inclined to think that the whole affair was the result of an intrigue.

Count Ciano insisted that his information was correct and added:

"I can't, of course, have the matter investigated by the Police, so as to convince you, nor do I wish to make a formal protest on the subject. I am merely communicating to you my information and it is up to you to draw the necessary conclusions."

Replying to the Minister's remark about not having the matter investigated by the Police, I said that it was with regret I noticed the general atmosphere of mistrust surrounding us—a mistrust that, in my opinion, was entirely without foundation. I could not find any other explanation for the fact that our Legation was constantly shadowed by detectives,

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who took down the names of the callers, kept a watch on everything which was going on and even ventured to pry with indiscreet eyes into the court of the Legation. This, I said, was a most unusual way of treating the Representative of a friendly Power.

The Minister, in obvious embarrassment, replied somewhat weakly that that kind of thing happened everywhere and that these police-measures were doubtless intended for our protection, but that if they caused me annoyance he would give instructions for them to cease.

I replied that if the Italian authorities considered the Legation as suspect, I had no objection to the police-supervision continuing. Perhaps then they might be persuaded of the contrary. At this the Minister relapsed into the usual effusive compliments.

J. POLITIS

No. 87

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 3, 1940

I have just been asked to call at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Minister, in an offensive and somewhat angry tone, told me that he had asked for me in order to speak to me on a matter of the gravest concern which might have disastrous consequences. He said he possessed proofs that British warships were using Greek territorial waters for the purpose of attack against the naval forces of Italy. This was an intolerable state of things and, unless a stop was put to it at once, Italy would take action. I remarked that both the manner and the substance of his communication filled me with intense surprise, and that I would be glad to know what basis there was for his *démarche*. He read me out the following from a memorandum prepared by the Naval Staff: On June 13, an Italian submarine was attacked by British planes 40 miles off Leucas. On June 28, another submarine was attacked by aircraft and destroyers not far from Zante. On June 29, a submarine was attacked and probably sunk by aircraft and destroyers coming from the direction of Zante. On June 30 and July 1, 4 British destroyers were anchored in the port of Milos. The Governor of the Dodecanese, to whom our previous reply to the charge of allowing British warships to use Cretan waters had been communicated, had expressed his astonishment and stated positively that British warships were constantly seeking the protection of the Greek Isles.

I began by enquiring whether, from a technical point of view, the mere presence of British planes 40 miles W. of Leucas was proof in itself that the planes had come from Greece.

The Minister refused to give an answer; this, he said, was no time for verbal fencing. He added that Italy had given us every possible proof of her friendly dispositions and had strictly adhered to her engagements. Now, however, she knew what to expect from Greece, her eyes having also been opened by the contents of the French Secret Archives which had recently fallen into the hands of the German Army in France.

I remarked that it was not proper to make insinuations without producing the evidence on which they were based. He replied somewhat inconsistently that those documents concerned an earlier period and that we might as well put them aside. The assistance the British Navy was receiving from Greece was sufficient proof unto to-day, and that meant

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war with Italy and Germany. It was time we realized that the Axis had won and that we stopped living in a Fool's paradise and backing both sides.

I told Count Ciano that, while bringing these charges, he was perfectly aware what were the real intentions of my Government—he had all the evidence at his disposal—and that it was not possible for him to imagine that we would risk taking a line of action which would bring us into conflict with Italy and Germany. I expressed my astonishment at his refusal to discuss the actual facts which formed the basis for this diplomatic onslaught, and hinted that we were entitled to draw our own conclusions. I reserved my answer, pending the receipt of further information from my Government.

J. POLITIS

No. 88

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 4, 1940

In my opinion, there are three possible explanations of yesterday's *démarche* by the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs:

1. Perhaps the whole thing was staged in order to serve as a justification for an eventual attack on us, a line of action towards which Italy is impelled not only by political but also by strategic considerations connected with Italy's naval defence against Britain. Facts in favour of this hypothesis are: the recent protest about Crete, the demand for the recall of our Consul at Brindisi, the constant shadowing of our Military Attaché, and the attack on our Minister at Ankara. Against this hypothesis we must set the argument that, only three days ago, every effort was made to stave off possible complications in the Balkans arising out of the Russian seizure of Bessarabia. It is just possible, however, they may think an attack on Greece would not have any further repercussions.

2. It may be an attempt to intimidate us into throwing in our lot with the Axis and force us to offer them certain facilities for their naval operations against Britain.

3. It is also possible that the Minister's *démarche* was merely an outburst of ill-temper provoked by the reports from his Naval Staff. The latter, in their attempt to find an excuse for the sinkings of Italian submarines and the general ineffectiveness of the Italian Navy, is trying to fasten the blame on Greece by means of vague and unsupported charges, such as the one about Crete.

The character of yesterday's *démarche* suggests that it is not merely a question of the violation of the rules of International Law concerning Neutrality (although no such case of violation has been proved). It is rather a case of a more general grievance arising out of the very fact of our neutrality and of our geographical position, itself an obstacle in the path of Italy's plan of defence.

The underlying causes of the Italian Foreign Minister's attitude are political, in other words his meaning is: "Either for us or against us." In my opinion, the very vagueness of the charges is intended to bring us round to asking them for a definition of their demands. This, of course, I carefully avoided doing in the course of the conversation.

J. POLITIS

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No. 89

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

July 4, 1940

The suspicion with which the Italian Foreign Minister regards our policy has made a most painful impression upon me. Not a single one of the four charges contained in the memorandum of the Italian Naval Staff can be proven against us. As you very rightly pointed out, the mere fact of a submarine having been sunk by an aeroplane 40 miles off the coast of Leucas cannot possibly justify the conclusion that the plane in question came from a base in Greece. The Hellenic Government give the most formal assurance that there is no air-base on the island of Leucas, and that no military aircraft have ever touched at any of the Ionian Islands mentioned in your telegram or at any point on the adjoining coasts of Western Greece. Add to this that planes following the air-route from the British bases in Egypt towards the Ionian Sea do not have to pass over Greece and the Greek islands. The same denial should be given to the charge concerning an air attack on submarines in the neighbourhood of Zante, as also to the charge concerning the attack on a submarine on June 29. No destroyer has called at any of the Ionian Islands, so that Zante is out of the question.

I am astonished that such accusations should be made without a shadow of proof. The most reasonable supposition to make in these cases, provided one is not prejudiced as the result of wrong information, would be to assume that all these attacks against Italian warships were based on Alexandria. As for the four destroyers at present at Milos, we officially declare that the destroyers in question belong to the Greek Navy and have been in port at Milos since June 10, as the Italian Legation in Athens can certify.

Finally, please reply to Count Ciano that what he is demanding under threat of war is that we should refrain from acts which we have never committed at all. In any case, we give him the formal assurance that we shall take every possible precautionary step in order to dispel whatever suspicions may exist concerning the strict observance of our neutrality. Greece's policy, ever since the outbreak of war, has been one of neutrality. This is still our policy to-day, and we shall continue to pursue the same policy with the greatest strictness. It is certainly a matter for regret that the Italian Minister should cast doubt on our sincerity.

Neutrality, in the nature of things, is bound to give rise to misunderstandings and complaints from both belligerents. Only yesterday, for instance, we received a protest from the British Government because on June 30 an Italian plane flew over Crete.

Count Ciano, by basing himself on inaccurate data, is being unfair to the Greek Government. The policy pursued by the latter, from the very start of the international crisis, would deserve the praise of any unprejudiced judge for its objectivity and impartiality in the face of events, and for the prudence shewn throughout the development of the situation. As regards Italy, the Hellenic Government long ago recognized Italy's rôle as a factor of first-class importance in the Mediterranean, and have pursued the establishment of thoroughly cordial relations with Italy who is now her neighbour both by land and by sea. Count Ciano is surely aware

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that one of my first acts on taking over the reins of Government in this country was solemnly to declare that Greece would never allow herself to be drawn into hostilities against Italy. Count Ciano, when voicing his grievances to you yesterday with so much bitterness, apart from the fact that his complaints were quite baseless, certainly ignored Greece's geographical position and the economic factors on which the revival of the New Hellenic State depends. From the beginning of the European conflict Greece has had only two aims in view: (1) not to become involved in the disputes between the groups of Great Powers, and, (2) to forestall any attempt to use her territory as a theatre of war. In persisting in this policy, Greece earnestly hopes that she does not find herself in opposition to the views of the Italian Government.

METAXAS

No. 90

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 6, 1940

I called on the Minister for Foreign Affairs at 8 p.m. and read him an exact translation of the whole of Your Excellency's telegram. The denial of the alleged incriminating facts, especially the statement that the destroyers at Milos were Greek, appeared to make a great impression upon him. After I had finished, he said: "Very well. I take note of M. Metaxas' declarations and trust that the future will confirm them."

I replied that, so far, our attitude had been fully in keeping with the Prime Minister's declarations, and that I was sure it would continue to be so in the future.

He added—obviously to save his face—that he had every reason to believe that his information was correct (referring, of course, to the information concerning our general political attitude and not to the facts disproved by our answer), and that he sincerely hoped there would be no further occasion for him to quote it.

I replied that as long as his information was shrouded in mystery I was not in a position to refute it, but he might rest assured that I would be only too glad to see him put his facts on the table.

"I have done everything in my power," he said "to prevent the war from spreading to Greece. I fear, however, that Greece has not done as much."

I replied that we were grateful to him and that, since we too had the same objective in view, there was *ipso facto* complete harmony between us.

Finally he remarked, in a jocular tone, that M. Metaxas, in his telegram, had brought a number of accusations against him. Nevertheless, he would like us to feel that it was his sincere desire to co-operate with us.

I replied in the same bantering tone that, having myself had to face his onslaught of the day before yesterday, I was forced to subscribe to M. Metaxas' statement that he had been unfair to Greece.

J. POLITIS

No. 91

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 7, 1940

In the course of yesterday's interview the Minister for Foreign Affairs told me, *en passant*, that he was perfectly aware of the kind of talk against

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Italy which was going on in Athenian society circles, at the clubs and in private discussions.

I retorted that it was only natural for all kinds of opinions to be voiced in private conversation, but I was afraid that the persons from whom he derived his information passed on what they heard out of *excès de zèle*, without taking into consideration the source.

The Minister took this to be a polite evasion and replied haughtily that he did not attach any importance to such expressions of opinion nor was he referring to that kind of talk when speaking of his information about Greece's attitude.

I quote the above as an example of the mentality that prevails here.

J. POLITIS

No. 92

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 9, 1940

Although Your Excellency's reply to the Italian *démarche* of the 3rd inst. was, relatively speaking, well received, I still suspect that the real motive at the bottom of these repeated Italian protests is to sound our dispositions preparatory to a diplomatic move of a much more extensive and material character. I learn from a number of sources that, owing to the indeterminate attitude of Russia, the Balkan policy of the Axis has lately been in process of evolution and is about to enter upon a new phase.

I am informed from a reliable source that the departure of Count Ciano for Berlin is connected with these impending changes. Thus it is not at all improbable that we may soon find ourselves exposed to a fresh diplomatic offensive. In my recent conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs I had the clear impression that the question: "Of what use to you now is the British guarantee?" was trembling on the tip of his lips.

J. POLITIS

No. 93

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 8, 1940

In completion of my telegram about the Italian *démarche* of July 3, I have the honour to add the following remarks:

The whole structure of the Foreign Minister's case was based on the two following main lines of argument:

(*a*) The grievances of the Naval General Staff relating to the four points mentioned in my telegram.

(*b*) The evidence supposed to have been found in the French Secret Archives proving that we were hedging.

The above supplied the Minister with his material for launching an attack of extraordinary violence, the effect of which was heightened by the gestures and the changes of voice which accompanied it. Owing perhaps to the calm manner in which, in contrast to his own tone of voice, I received his communication, the Minister twice explained to me that it was a threat of war and, a few minutes later, he began repeating his threat in an even more precise form. This time I interrupted the Minister and

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said that I was perfectly aware of the meaning which he attached to his *démarche*, and that he might rest assured that I would not fail to convey the full meaning of his words to my Government.

As regard the first count in his indictment, the Minister obviously realized the slender nature of the charges and therefore, as soon as I had refuted the first of his four points, declined to continue the discussion, remarking that this was no time for verbal fencing. When I expressed my astonishment at his refusal to enlighten me further on the facts which were the cause of so intense an indignation against my country, and remarked that it was all the more essential for me to have this information because, only a few days previously, I had received a similar, though somewhat milder protest, on grounds shown to be entirely baseless, the Minister's only reply, given in an off-hand tone, was that the Governor of Rhodes had expressed astonishment at our answer and had repeated his certainty that we were harbouring British vessels. Count Ciano then switched off to the second count in his indictment, as stated in my telegram.

But this, too, proved to be only a sort of bogey, for when I challenged him to state the contents of the supposed incriminating documents, the Minister remarked that these concerned an earlier period which he would much rather leave alone. I am inclined to think there was nothing in this charge either, for since then the documents in question have been published, without revealing anything of an incriminating nature to our detriment.

This being so, the question arises as to what can have been the Foreign Minister's motive in making representations of a gravity out of all proportion with the flimsiness of the charges on which they were based.

It is obvious that, since her entry into the war, Italy is in a state of extreme nervous tension, for the reasons stated elsewhere. The Minister's mention of British naval and aerial attacks so close to Italian waters is in itself significant. I doubt, however, whether this psychological factor is sufficient to explain the Italian attitude. Italy has at her disposal all the necessary means for investigating, within certain limits, the truth of the Naval Staff's accusations. In Greece she has her Legation, her Consulates, her schools, as well as a large number of her own nationals settled all over the country. Further, she possesses a whole network of spies, whose task is greatly facilitated by the innate fondness for political discussion among the Greek public. Under the circumstances, would it be easy for British ships and planes to come and lie up in our harbours, to move backwards and forwards in the narrow Greek seas, to land at our aerodromes, without it being possible to detect a single concrete case substantiating the assumptions of the Italian Naval Staff? The Ministry for Foreign Affairs ought to insist on the production of such evidence before making threatening representations which are bound to collapse like a pack of cards at the first denial.

Taking the above into consideration, I ask myself, as I have already said in my previous telegram, whether, besides the psychological factor already mentioned, there be not also an intention to reconnoitre the ground, not necessarily for hostile military action, but with a view to some yet undefined military or merely political proposals.

J. POLITIS

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No. 94

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Italian Legation in Athens

July 12, 1940

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the honour to bring to the knowledge of the Royal Italian Legation that to-day at 6.30 p.m. three Italian bombers bombed and machine-gunned the *Orion*, an auxiliary ship of the Royal Navy, belonging to the Lighthouse Service, while she was on her way to supply the Grabusa Lighthouse inside the Gulf of Kissamos (Crete).

The same planes also attacked the destroyer *Hydra* which had been ordered to go to her rescue.

The Royal Hellenic Government are compelled to protest against these attacks on units of the Royal Navy inside Greek territorial waters and would be grateful if the Royal Italian Legation would take urgent steps in order to prevent the repetition of such incidents, which constitute a violation of the sovereignty of Greece.

No. 95

The Italian Consul at Patras to the Préfet of Achaia

July 15, 1940

I have the honour to convey to you my warmest thanks for the interest so kindly shewn and the promptitude of the steps taken to rescue the crew of the Italian hydroplane which was forced to come down in the sea off Cephalonia.

S. GRADENIGO

No. 96

The Royal Italian Legation to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 15, 1940

The Royal Italian Legation has the honour to request the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to be so kind as to convey the warmest thanks of the Italian Government to the competent Greek authorities for the assistance and kind offices extended to the crews of aeroplane S. 79 and hydroplane Cant. 506 which had to make a forced landing in Greek waters.

No. 97

The Minister in Berlin to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

July 23, 1940

The *Volkischer Beobachter*, commenting in a leading article on the newly-published documents of the French General Staff, which recently fell into the hands of the German armies, quotes three of them (Nos. 33, 34 and 35) which refer to Greece.

1. No. 33 contains the reply of General Gamelin, the French Commander-in-Chief, to a request on the part of General Weygand for the despatch of war-material with a view to the eventual landing of an Army Corps in Macedonia.

2. No. 34 is a confidential order, dated May 15, giving the names of

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certain American States to be used as code-words to indicate Greece, Turkey, Crete, Salamis, Salonica, etc., in the correspondence between the French Commander-in-Chief and General Weygand.

3. No. 35 is General Gamelin's negative reply to General Weygand's request for the despatch of military reinforcements.

RANGABÉ

No. 98

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Berlin

July 24, 1940

The new French General Staff documents published speak for themselves and prove convincingly that Greece was entirely ignorant of any such plans.

MAVROUDIS

No. 99

Note handed by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Italian Minister

July 27, 1940

The competent Greek military authorities report that on the 12th inst., at 10.50 a.m., an Italian aeroplane was sighted passing over Crete above Rethymno at an altitude of 2-3,000 metres, flying in a south-westerly direction.

MAVROUDIS

No. 100

Note handed by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Italian Minister

July 27, 1940

Yesterday, at 12.45 p.m., a group of 10 bombers coming from Albania were sighted flying over Greek territory, following the line of the Drin valley at an altitude of approximately 3,000 metres.

The planes in question were flying in the direction of Khani Delvinaki and Kalpaki and turned south-east. Three of them flew over Metsovo.

MAVROUDIS

No. 101

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Italian Legation

July 31, 1940

By a communication dated the 12th inst., to which no answer has yet been returned, the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs brought to the notice of the Royal Italian Legation that three Italian bombers had bombed the auxiliary ship of the Royal Navy, *Orion*, and the destroyer *Hydra* at Grabusa (Crete), and protested against these attacks as constituting a violation of the sovereignty of Greece.

Notwithstanding the above, yesterday at 6.50 a.m. an Italian plane, coming from the direction of the Dodecanese, flew over the Gulf of Corinth and dropped four bombs on the destroyers of the Royal Navy *King George* and *Queen Olga*, as well as on two of our submarines at anchor in the port of Naupactus.

The Royal Hellenic Government regret that they are obliged to enter a vigorous protest against this fresh act of aggression perpetrated against

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units of the Royal Navy within the territorial waters of the Kingdom and request the Royal Italian Legation to take immediate steps in order to put an end to such regrettable incidents.

No. 102

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 1, 1940

In the course of an interview which I had requested for the purpose of discussing other matters, Signor Butti, Director-General of the Department for European Affairs, informed me that the Minister for Foreign Affairs was incensed against us and had instructed him to notify me, for the information of my Government, that the untoward state of affairs which he had denounced in the course of his last communication to me was still continuing, and that Italy was not disposed to tolerate any further protraction of this situation.

Having in mind that Your Excellency's reply had then proved all the accusations levelled by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to be completely unfounded, I asked whether there had been any further incidents and what were the substantiating causes of to-day's communication.

To this the Director-General replied that it would be pointless to embark upon such a discussion, but, as I insisted on knowing the reason for the communication, he indicated with some asperity that I could confine myself to transmitting the statement, hinting that this was all that was required of me. I pointed out that, in my belief, the object of my presence in Rome was to contribute as far as possible to the clearing up of questions which might arise and to remedy possible misunderstandings, and not simply to transmit menacing communications, the cause of which I did not know.

Signor Butti objected that in the previous communication made to me the Minister for Foreign Affairs had mentioned the accusations made by the Naval High Command. It was regarding the continuation of the symptoms which gave rise to them that he was speaking now.

The Minister, I said, had in fact, a few weeks ago, threatened Greece with war in the name not only of Italy but also of Germany, because, for instance, four destroyers were at anchor off the island of Milos. These destroyers turned out to be Greek. I added that, of course, when he now told me that the cause for complaint had not been eliminated, such a communication was in the nature of an enigma.

The Naval High Command, remarked the Director-General (without clearly connecting this remark with the preceding case), have ascertained that British ships, alternatively flying the British and Greek flags, were obtaining supplies in Greek waters.

I objected that we could neither know nor be responsible if the British made illegal use of our flag at sea. He said that on the contrary they sailed under the British flag on the high seas and flew the Greek flag when they put in at Greek ports. I objected that a British ship could not possibly enter a Greek port flying the Greek flag without this being noticed, not only by the authorities but by everybody else. Therefore such an occurrence could only be thought of as taking place with the connivance of the authorities, but I said I did not believe that such a supposition was being made, and that if it were, I was certainly not disposed to discuss it.

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I added that I was certain that all these misunderstandings were due to errors on the part of the air observers, as was proved by the recent bombing of Greek ships in Cretan territorial waters.

In defence of the airmen he adduced the meaningless argument that a newspaper in Crete had on that day written that Italian aircraft had bombed a British ship.

I remarked that I could not very well follow his line of thought, but that in any case the statements of a Cretan newspaper were a very poor argument against the investigation of the Greek authorities which had ascertained that our ships had been not only bombed but also machine-gunned, which implied that the aircraft flew at a low level.

The Director-General concluded by asking what reason the Naval High Command could have had for insisting on their assurances. He supposed that I could not possibly imagine this to have been done purely out of prejudice against Greece. I said that I was not as positively sure of this as he was. I added that propaganda was being carried on in Rome, indirect accounts of which regularly reached me. This propaganda consisted in spreading reports of the accusations levelled against us by the General Staff. Curiously enough, I added, even reports of official communications about to be made to me were previously circulated in Roman society. I should be curious to know where the source of these rumours was to be found.

Finally, I told the Director-General that I would transmit to Your Excellency what had been communicated to me on the part of the Minister, but that I was certain that within a few days I should return to ask what it was all about, and to repeat that it was not possible to cause inexistent happenings to cease.

"As you please," replied the Director-General.

J. POLITIS

No. 103

The Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Rome

August 2, 1940

The Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs told our Ambassador in Bucarest that Signor Mussolini hinted to him that Italo-Greek relations were at a somewhat "delicate" stage. M. Collas tried to verify what exactly was meant by this expression and received the answer that Signor Mussolini seemed to suggest that there was friction between the two countries.

MAVROUDIS

No. 104

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 3, 1940

The Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to call to-day and, in a sharp tone, demanded that our Consul at Trieste should be recalled immediately. He asked me to see that he left Italy that same day, otherwise he would take steps, as, according to his information, M. Scarpas had been using insulting expressions about Italy and the Italian Army. Count Ciano's tone was peremptory and the contemptuous expressions

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he used in referring to our Consul might very well have been omitted out of deference towards us.

I retorted that, although I did not know whether the accusations were well founded, the mere declaration that M. Scarpas had ceased to be *persona grata* with the Italian Government was quite sufficient without there being any need to give to the interview such an unpleasant turn.

The Minister, realizing that he had gone too far, changed his tone and went on to explain to me that the question only concerned M. Scarpas and had nothing to do with the relations between the two countries.

I doubt whether M. Scarpas did use disparaging language about Italy. However, I told Count Ciano that it was not up to me to order M. Scarpas' departure and that I would refer the matter to you by telegram.

J. POLITIS

No. 105

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legation in Rome

August 3, 1940

Kindly instruct M. Scarpas to return to Athens immediately.

METAXAS

No. 106

The Préfet of Zante to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 6, 1940

An Italian flying-boat came down in the sea to-day at about 1 p.m. owing to a mishap. The officer in command stated that she was carrying the mail from Brindisi to Leros, but the captain of the Port who examined her found that she was a naval plane. The latter received instructions from the Naval Defence Command, Patras District, to detain her and intern the crew. The order has been carried out.

P. METAXAS

No. 107

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Italian Legation in Athens

August 6, 1940

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the honour to bring to the knowledge of the Royal Italian Legation that, on the 2nd inst., an Italian aeroplane flying over the Gulf of Corinth dropped six bombs on the Revenue Cutter A6 at a distance of one mile from the Lagusa light-house between the islands of Ægina and Salamis.

The Hellenic Government regret to have to protest against this fresh act of aggression by Italian aircraft within Greek territorial waters, thus violating the neutrality of Greece, and would be obliged if the Royal Italian Legation would urgently take the necessary steps to prevent the repetition of similar incidents.

No. 108

Summary of a conversation between the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Italian Minister

August 7, 1940

Having asked the Italian Minister to come and see me, I raised the question of Greco-Italian relations which, although fundamentally

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friendly, were nevertheless being envenomed without reason, owing to a faulty treatment of questions of detail.

I first brought up the question of the Italian Admiralty's accusations, which had all been proved unfounded, but nevertheless had been the cause of the irritability displayed by Count Ciano and of the unbecoming tone adopted by the latter in his conversations with M. Politis. On the other hand, our protests concerning the bombing of our warships by Italian aircraft on three separate occasions, namely, the bombing of the *Hydra* off Crete, that of our squadron near Naupaktos, and of a coastguard vessel near Ægina, had remained unanswered.

At this point Signor Grazzi interrupted me and said that, in regard to these three protests, he was in possession of data enabling him to reply to the one concerning Naupaktos and to assure me in all sincerity, not only in his official capacity but also personally, that Italian aeroplanes had never so much as flown over the Gulf of Corinth on the days mentioned, and that he would reply in writing to our protest on that count.

I answered that I would await his reply, but this still left over the other two cases that I had mentioned. As regards one of these—the case of the *Hydra*—there could not be a shadow of doubt. He replied that, with regard to these, he was not yet in possession of the necessary data to enable him to give an answer.

I went on to say that these were not the only violations of our neutrality. There were also the repeated flights of Italian aircraft over our territory. As he attempted to dispute some of these facts, I observed that as regards one, at least, of these cases, there could be no doubt whatsoever—I was referring, I said, to the flight of a squadron of 10 aeroplanes, obviously coming from Albania, over Epirus. Over and above, there was also the harsh tone adopted by Count Ciano towards our Minister in Rome. Let me give you an instance. Upon being informed that our Consul at Trieste had used disrespectful language about the Italian Army, Count Ciano, instead of protesting to our Minister and demanding appropriate satisfaction, whereupon we would have hastened to recall our Consul, put forward the demand for his removal in a peremptory tone and insisted that it should take place that very same day. All the above instances go far to prove an unfriendly disposition on the part of Italy, as well as a feeling of distrust towards us. Yet further proof of this fact is to be found in Count Ciano's complaint that, according to his information, British warships inside our territorial waters, and, what is more, in our own ports, fly the Greek flag, a statement which, by the way it is put and implying as it does that the above happens with our knowledge, is a serious reflexion on our conduct.

Signor Grazzi interrupted me to say that M. Politis had obviously misunderstood what was said to him, for the Italians never intended to suggest that this happened with our knowledge.

I replied that, in that case, the charge brought against us was unjustified. I insisted, notwithstanding his protests, that the meaning of the statement was that the above took place with our knowledge and, therefore, constituted an expression of mistrust which was a grave reflexion upon our conduct.

I went on to explain that such mistrust was entirely unjustifiable, for Greece had observed her promise of neutrality honestly and sincerely,

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and had used all her influence for the preservation of peace in the Balkans.

This had been Greece's policy right from the beginning of the war and, not only now, after the German victories in France. To this Signor Grazzi fully assented and said that we were under a complete misapprehension if we thought that Signor Mussolini's dispositions and those of Count Ciano were not friendly. He added, emphasizing his words: "I am not expressing my personal opinion, but at this moment I tell you, speaking in my capacity as Italian Minister, that no mistrust exists on the part of Italy towards Greece in general, and particularly towards her Government."

Signor Grazzi added that our coasts were so extensive and indented that a British ship might easily take refuge in some unfrequented creek without our knowledge. I replied that even supposing that such an unfrequented creek had served as a refuge to some British ship unknown to us, the Italian Government could very well (since, as he said, they were amicably disposed towards us and harboured no distrust) have drawn our attention to the matter in a friendly way—whereupon we too would have hastened to take action as it behoved a neutral—instead of threatening us in Rome in a way which was certainly incompatible with their good dispositions.

Signor Grazzi then observed that he was under the impression that our Minister in Rome, though perfect in every way, none the less appeared not to be quite used to the vivacious manner of expression employed by Italians in general, and thus misunderstood this vivacity of expression, putting it down to an unfriendly disposition or a feeling of mistrust, which, in fact, did not exist.

I replied that, whatever might be his (Signor Grazzi's) own personal impression, I wished him to inform Rome that it would be particularly agreeable to us if Count Ciano's tone towards our Minister could change, so as not to give rise to the impression that our relations with Italy were not such as, according to Signor Grazzi's own words, they really were. Moreover, I must make the friendly request that all discussions between us should be carried on in an absolutely friendly tone.

The whole conversation with Signor Grazzi took place in an entirely friendly spirit, and at the end he repeated to me—again laying stress on this point—the absence of all distrust on the part of Italy towards Greek policy, as well as the thoroughly friendly dispositions of both Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano towards Greece.

No. 109

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 7, 1940

I have the honour to report the following conversation which I have had with Signor Benini, Under-Secretary of State for Albanian Affairs.

I called on the Under-Secretary, as you know, about the question of the interpreter of our Consulate-General at Tirana. Towards the end of our conversation Signor Benini told me that the question of the interpreter was beyond his jurisdiction and that he would have to submit my suggestion to the Minister; after which he would be in a position to give

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me a reply. Resuming the conversation, and taking up the thread of his last phrase, as though mention of the Minister had brought another thought into his mind, he added.

"Monsieur le Ministre, I learn to my great regret that our relations have become delicate."

This phrase immediately reminded me of an identical communication made to our Ambassador at Bucharest by the Roumanian Foreign Minister.

I asked in a tone of surprise what gave him that idea. He replied that this was not his personal opinion, for, as was natural, he was not fully aware of every outstanding political question, but that he had heard this from Count Ciano. "I must add," said Signor Benini, "that the Minister was most ill-humoured over Greece." He seemed surprised that I did not appear to know of the Minister's bad humour and asked me whether it was a long time since I had last seen Count Ciano, insinuating that to see him was enough for anyone to realize that he was boiling over with rage.

I replied that I had recently seen the Minister, but had not taken away any new impression from my visit, for the simple reason that for several weeks past, on every occasion when I had had the good fortune to meet the Minister, he had always on principle been in a bad temper and without having any real grounds for this. I added that perhaps Signor Benini knew of the actual reason for this unfriendly disposition.

"I have heard," he said, "that you are flirting with the British. This is a pity, since before this our relations had taken an excellent course from which you are now deviating." I replied that in attributing to us a definite attitude it was surely an elementary obligation on his part to substantiate his deductions by facts or at least by more positive indications. I said that the Minister had asked for me some weeks ago and, in a tone which did not betray a very friendly disposition, had made certain charges in the same spirit as that now again revealed by Signor Benini. On that occasion the Minister, when I insisted, had told me on what grounds he based his conviction that we were giving preferential treatment to the British Forces, and I saw then that the whole matter resolved itself into two main charges: first, that British aircraft were using the Ionian Islands as a base to attack Italian submarines in the Ionian Sea, and second, that four British warships had for some days been in the harbour of Milos. Two days later I replied to the Minister that the four ships in question were Greek destroyers which had been stationed at Milos for several months past, as the Italian Legation was well qualified to know, and that there was no aerodrome on the islands mentioned by Count Ciano

The Under-Secretary answered that these replies were indeed conclusive.

I replied that notwithstanding this, it was on the above two ungrounded presuppositions that the Minister had threatened me with war, and the explanations given by my Government, which he himself had defined as "conclusive," had produced results quite other than those expected. Some days ago, Signor Butti, acting on the Minister's instructions, had repeated all these charges to me *ab initio*, and even now the Under-Secretary himself, I told him, was once more reverting to them in brief with the same mysterious vagueness. "I confess," I said, "that this attitude appears most strange to me and, to be frank with you, after every interview in the Ministry I go away with the impression that Italy is not actuated by

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friendly dispositions towards Greece. Since the occasion now offers, I said, I will mention further curious signs."

"During the last few days the Italian air force has been more or less systematically bombing our ships in our territorial waters, even to the innermost recesses of our bays and inlets. It seems that the Italian air force has not properly appreciated, or has misconstrued the discretion shewn by the Greek Government in regard to the first of these incidents; and within a few days a second and then a third incident followed, while our protests remain unanswered.

"In contrast to the above tangible example of the amicable intentions by which we are inspired, it should be noted that not only diplomatic but even social circles in Rome have advance knowledge of any impending *démarche* you are about to make to me and of its contents. I have observed this on many occasions, and therefore consider myself entitled to suppose that there is someone who is anxious to prejudice public opinion against us.

"Let us," I continued, "now come to certain more substantial observations. Among other proofs of Italy's good intentions the Minister for Foreign Affairs has informed me with some emphasis of the fact that Italian military forces in Albania have been considerably reduced. However, according to information which I have obtained since my arrival in Rome, the Italian forces in Albania have been slowly but steadily increasing. It is true that the total force is not for the present such as to cause us anxiety, yet I cannot overlook the fact that it is steadily being reinforced at the very moment when the Minister is under the contrary impression.

"Moreover, you surely do not expect me to accept as a particularly good omen the manifestation of irredentist tendencies and territorial claims on the part of the Albanians, especially when it coincides with Count Ciano's visit to Albania."

"Students' nonsense," remarked the Under-Secretary with the air of one who wished to show that no importance should be attached to it, and he added that a denial had been made, while he tried without success to remember how, where and when this denial had been forthcoming.

I replied that I had seen no such denial, and that as regards his supposition that these manifestations were mere students' nonsense, it appeared to me erroneous, because, according to my information, members of the Italian Administration were implicated in the movement. But in any case, in view of the discipline and efficient organization of the Fascist Empire, it would have appeared more natural if such manifestations had been prevented, at least during the visit of the Foreign Minister.

"Or do you imagine," I asked the Under-Secretary, "that the resolutions of Fascist organizations and various publications which mention Greek islands as included among Italy's claims, as well as other matters of this nature, have escaped my attention?"

"Under such conditions," I concluded, "I am entitled to come to you and ask what is happening and what your real intentions are. You therefore must realize my amazement on hearing you state that our relations have become delicate through our fault. I admit that this is something which I have been turning over in my mind for days, and, to be sincere, I have only been able to find two possible explanations: either the

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Italian Naval High Command are actuated by anti-Greek prejudice, for all your assurances to the contrary, or else you have changed your policy in regard to us for reasons which we at any rate do not know, perhaps because you do not wish us to know them."

The Under-Secretary, a man of courteous demeanour, followed the whole of my account attentively and with a certain expression of surprise, as though the picture I had drawn did not correspond with his own suppositions.

He said he would, if I wished, report to the Minister all that I had said. He himself saw no reason for any hostile prejudice against us. If any misunderstanding had crept in, it should not be difficult to dispel it. He presumed that I, no less than he, would see the advantages of a sincere collaboration, and now especially, when it was already certain that England had lost the war, this avenue offered wide possibilities.

I said that I had no objection to his transmitting my doubts to the Minister, although the Minister was already aware of most of the above views, for I had had occasion to lay them before him myself. Above all, the Minister knew that the principal aim of the Greek Government was to preserve the country from the evils of war as far as depended upon us, and this was only possible by the strictest adherence to neutrality. It was not therefore reasonable for us to flirt with the British and thus to adopt a policy contrary to our own desires. Our policy, I said, was plain and straightforward, and we had a clear conscience. We hoped to the last that this would be appreciated.

It should be noted that, prior to this interview, Signor Benini had been called by Count Ciano to take part in a conference with the Duce at the Palazzo Venezia, and that the whole trend given to the interview had been obviously determined from higher quarters. It is also significant that Signor Mussolini advised us through two channels that our relations were strained.

No doubt remains in my mind that all the attacks launched under various pretexts by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the disturbing warnings which reach us by devious ways, are intended to prepare us morally for discussions of some new form of collaboration based on the renouncement of the British guarantee and on who knows what other concessions. The method is not a good one, but of course typically Fascist.

No. 110

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 9, 1940

Before speaking to me, the Under-Secretary of State for Albanian Affairs had seen Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano, and, obviously acting on instructions, he repeated to me the phrase used by Signor Mussolini to the Roumanian Foreign Minister, namely, that Italy's relations with Greece had reached a "delicate" point.

Please note that, during my conversation with him about the incident concerning our Consul at Trieste, Count Ciano made no mention of "delicate relations", but, on the contrary, was careful to separate the incident from the question of our relations.

Consequently, it is a matter for conjecture why Signor Mussolini and

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Count Ciano should have wished to convey to us through indirect channels their personal view of the present state of relations with Greece. Why this alternation of threats and demonstrations of pretended friendship?

They themselves certainly realize that the Naval General Staff's accusations are unfounded. I think that the real stumbling-block is Greece's persistence in her attitude of neutrality, and that this alternation of threats and cajoleries is a prelude to a summons to toe the line.

J. POLITIS

SECOND PERIOD

(August 11-October 28, 1940)

[Documents Nos. 111-177]

No. 111
Statement issued by the Agence Stefani

August 11, 1940.

A deep impression has been produced on the Albanian population under Greek rule by a terrible political crime committed on the Greco-Albanian border.

The great Albanian patriot Daout Hodja, born in the unredeemed region of Tsamuria, has been savagely murdered on Albanian territory close to the frontier. His body was found headless. According to later information, the murderers were Greek agents who carried the head back into Greek territory and delivered it to the authorities, who had already set a price on this Albanian patriot's head many years ago. It is also learned that his head was paraded about from village to village by order of the Greek local authorities and exposed to public view so as to terrorize the unredeemed Albanian brethren in the above-mentioned district. Daout Hodja had been compelled some time ago to leave Tsamuria secretly in order to escape from the persecutions of the Greek authorities who could not forgive his untiring propaganda among his compatriots for the annexation of Tsamuria to the Mother-country. He fled to Albania, where he again and again received messages threatening him with death. This murder, which has deeply affected the Albanians of Tsamuria, is not the only recent incident in the Greek policy of oppression.

A few months back a small note was found pinned on the corpse of an Albanian murdered in Tsamuria, saying that the same fate awaited all those Albanians who hoped to liberate their country from Greek rule.

This ancient Albanian territory is situated between the present Greco-Albanian frontier and the Ionian coast and extends as far as the outskirts of Preveza and to the borders of the province of Jannina. It is inhabited by some fifty thousand pure-blooded Albanians, who form the vast majority of the population.

Up to a few years ago, however, their number was far greater. In 1913, when Tsamuria was annexed to Greece, its Albanian population amounted to some 80,000 souls as against just over 10,000 Greeks.

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Within a few years the Greek policy of denationalisation, which aimed at establishing fictitious Greek rights over this territory, decimated the inhabitants of the region by means of confiscation, massacre, and deportation.

Nevertheless, the Albanians of Tsamuria remained a compact national group retaining their customs and language, and putting up a bold resistance to the usurpers, so much so that even to-day they still constitute the dominant element in that region.

A striking example of their devotion to their native country was given by the Albanians of Tsamuria in 1924, when the Greek Government, invoking the Treaty of Lausanne, which provided for the exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations, demanded that all the Moslems of Tsamuria, i.e., the whole of the Albanian population, should be exchanged against the Greeks established in Turkish territory. The inhabitants of Tsamuria, firmly supported by their brethren in Albania, offered so powerful a resistance that the Greek Government had to abandon this nefarious scheme and recognize their Albanian origin. To-day, blind tyranny is weighing more heavily than ever on this population, so that many of the inhabitants of Tsamuria are compelled to seek refuge in Albania in order to escape these ruthless persecutions. According to several reliable statements, the Greek authorities have gone so far as to declare in public that the Italians will shortly be expelled from Albania.

But the population of Tsamuria is less than ever disposed to yield to Greek oppression. If her devotion to the Albanian Motherland was sufficient to sustain Tsamuria's faith in those dark days of Albania's destiny, to-day the Albanians of Tsamuria will find even stronger grounds for hope in the renewed fortunes of their Mother-country.

No. 112

Communiqué of the Agence d'Athènes

August 12, 1940

We are in a position to affirm that the information transmitted from Tirana by the Agence Stefani regarding the alleged murder of an Albanian patriot by Greek agents is utterly unfounded. About two months ago, two Albanians, who had managed to penetrate into Greek territory, were arrested, and when examined admitted having killed the individual named Daout Hodja in a quarrel. The latter was a notorious brigand on whose head a price had been set twenty years ago by the Greek Government on account of murders and other ordinary crimes committed by him on Greek territory. The Greek Government placed the murderers under arrest and ordered that the usual procedure in such matters should be followed. On July 25, the Italian Legation in Athens informed the Hellenic Ministry for Foreign Affairs that a regular demand for their extradition would shortly be made by the Albanian Ministry of Justice.*

(*) The following is the text of the Note addressed by the Royal Italian Legation to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs on July 25, 1940:

"The Royal Italian Legation have the honour to bring the following to the knowledge of the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs:

On June 17 last a headless corpse was discovered between Porto-Edda and Konispolis near the Greco-Albanian frontier. The local authorities identified the body as being that of an Albanian forest-guard named Daout

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The Greek authorities, who continue to keep the said Albanians in custody, are still awaiting this extradition demand. It should be observed that the Italian Note, which is couched in the ordinary terms employed in administrative affairs of a current nature, states that Daout Hodja had settled in Albania twenty years ago.

To sum up: (1) There is no question of an Albanian patriot but just of an ordinary criminal. (2) the murderers are not Greeks but Albanians. (3) Daout Hodja committed his crimes and was outlawed twenty years ago. (4) The Italian authorities were in possession of all the facts at least twenty days ago.

We should like to add that: (1) The alleged parading of the head from village to village is a pure myth. (2) So also is the story about the murder of another Albanian and the finding on his dead body of a note containing threats of similar murders. We are moreover obliged to affirm in the most categorical terms that the allegations of a more general nature contained in the said Agency's statements are not founded on fact.

It is a matter of common knowledge that, notwithstanding the victories of 1912 which extended the Greek occupation well beyond the present Greco-Albanian frontier, Greece recognized the decision of the Great European Powers fixing the present Greco-Albanian frontier as being final. As regards the so-called question of Tsamuria, it should be mentioned that, at the time of the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, the Moslem inhabitants of this region repeatedly expressed the wish to emigrate to Turkey. In view, however, of the plea advanced that these Moslems were of Albanian origin, the Greek Government, acting in the broadest spirit of conciliation, voluntarily resigned its right *in toto* to the exchange of populations in this district of Epirus (Préfecture of Thesprotia), notwithstanding the wish expressed by the interested parties themselves and the very reasonable proposition of the Mixed Commission which provided for an impartial examination of each individual case.

It is thanks to the above that to-day, out of a total population of

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Hodja from Tsamuria, aged 50, who had taken refuge in Albania twenty years ago. The enquiry further revealed that on June 14, Daout Hodja went out on his rounds to visit the pastures under his charge in the district of Sheshin. There he met one Pilo Kotso, son of Dirnos, aged 17, and Elia Foto, son of Sotir, aged 24, both natives of Moursi.

After a short talk, Hodja lay down under a tree and took a nap. While asleep, he was treacherously murdered by the aforesaid individuals who, after beheading the corpse, took refuge in Greek territory, a distance of 30 minutes' walk, taking with them the victim's head.

The Italian authorities arrested an individual named Cotso Sulliotti, owner of a mill situated near the spot where the murder was committed and who probably was privy to it, as well as the father of Pilo Kotso.

The Royal Legation, acting on instructions from the Italian Government, has the honour to request that Pilo Kotso and Elia Foto, who have taken refuge on Greek soil, probably at Filiates or in its vicinity, should be held in temporary custody pending formal demand for their extradition, which will shortly be made by the Albanian Ministry for Justice.

While awaiting a reply on the above matter, the Royal Italian Legation seizes this opportunity of renewing to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs the assurance of its highest regard."

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65,074 in this district, 18,109 belong to the category mentioned. The latter enjoy the benefits of a paternal administration and live in complete harmony with the rest of their fellow-citizens. We wish specially to underline this figure of 18,000, which has never been exceeded.

Finally, it is hardly necessary to point out that the statement accusing the Greek authorities of having said that the Italians would soon be expelled from Albania is entirely without foundation.

Note: Contrary to established usage, neither the above nor any of the subsequent *communiqués* of the Agence d'Athènes were published in the Italian Press.

No. 113

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 12, 1940

The simultaneous publication in all the papers, beneath sensational headlines on the front page, of the Stefani *communiqué* is due to definite instructions from the competent Ministry.

At this afternoon's meeting of the foreign correspondents, the representative of the Ministry said that the Albanian's murder had caused a profound sensation in Italian public opinion, that any injury to Albania was an injury done to Italy, and that the Italian Government intend lodging a strong protest in Athens.

Questioned by a correspondent about the date of the murder, he merely replied that he did not know.

J. POLITIS

No. 114

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to all the Royal Legations

August 13, 1940.

A reply was given yesterday, through the channel of the "Agence d'Athènes," to the Agence Stefani's *communiqué* relating to the murder in Albania of Daout Hodja, the bandit on whose head a price had been set. It is, of course, unnecessary for us to stress the point that the contents of that reply scrupulously correspond to the real facts. Nor is it necessary to add that the Greek authorities are in no way implicated in the murder of this Albanian, and that his murderers are totally unknown to us. The murdered man, whom the Agence Stefani represents as being an Albanian patriot, was an ordinary criminal who had fled to Albania twenty years ago and who had convictions against him by the Assize-Courts of Jannina and Preveza for murder, brigandage, attempted murder, robbery, etc. Further, we need hardly point out that the Government could not for a moment think of approving any action opposed to the present *régime* in Albania, at a time when every effort was being made not only to avoid any friction with Italy but also to improve and develop relations with her, not to speak of the policy of strict neutrality pursued by us since the beginning of the war. Even as late as the 7th inst., the Italian Minister declared to us most categorically, emphasizing the fact that he was not expressing his personal views but was at that moment speaking as the representative of his Government, that there

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was no distrust on Italy's part against Greece in general or against her Government in particular, and that both Signor Mussolini's and Count Ciano's dispositions were perfectly friendly.

It is a matter for conjecture whether this sudden change on Italy's part proves an intention to take immediate action against us, or whether her object is merely to put forward from now the question of Tsamuria, reserving the right to seek a settlement of the question at the conclusion of peace. In any case, we are astonished at her attitude, which arouses our justifiable suspicions and certainly does not contribute to that improvement in our mutual relations which we have always sincerely sought.

The Under-Secretary, M. Mavroudis, to-day requested the Italian Minister to call upon him and expressed to him the astonishment of the Royal Government at the *communiqué* of the Agence Stefani and at the attitude of the Italian Press. He observed that this attitude was a characteristic sign of the mistrust prevailing against Greece, and that it was not in the Government's power to eliminate that mistrust as long as Italy, notwithstanding our categorical assurances, deliberately continued to persist therein.

He further emphasized that, in consequence of this attitude of Italy's, there was a risk of Greco-Italian relations relapsing into the previous state of coldness whence they had emerged thanks to the sincere efforts deployed on both sides and which had given grounds for hope of a still further improvement in their relations.

In conclusion, M. Mavroudis clearly hinted that, in the event of an attack by Italy, the Royal Government's decision to resist remained unshaken.

METAXAS.

No. 115

Communiqué of the Agence d'Athènes

August 14, 1940

With regard to the murder of Daout Hodja by two Albanians in Albanian territory two months ago, the Penal Register supplies the following information:

1. By decision No. 36 of October 9, 1919, of the Preveza Assize-Court, Hodja and his two accomplices Vassilios Cotzia (Christian), Mallio Osman (Moslem), and Take Nikomani (Christian) were sentenced by default to penal servitude for life for the premeditated murder of Vehip Tsimo (Moslem) and Zekir Rehip (Moslem).

2. By decision No. 14 of November 14, 1919, of the Jannina Assize-Court, Hodja was condemned by default to twenty years' penal servitude for murdering, with the aid of an accomplice, Zekir Zeko (Moslem) and Rahip Habib Bey (Moslem).

3. By decision No. 30 of June 10, 1921, of the Preveza Assize-Court, Hodja and his accomplices Take Nikomani (Christian), Constantine Souliotis (Christian), and Mallio Bousi (Moslem) were sentenced by default to seventeen years' penal servitude for robbing Ahmet Hasin (Moslem), Balouk Mehmet (Moslem), and Ismail Tsortsi (Moslem), for cattle-thieving and attempted murder against Hussein Yacoub (Moslem) and Vassili Tsouvalis (Christian), and for illegally carrying weapons.

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4. By decision No. 14 of December 1921 of the Preveza Assize-Court, Hodja was sentenced by default to four years' imprisonment for attempted blackmail.

5. By decision No. 22 of the year 1923 of the Jannina Assize-Court, Hodja, together with his accomplices Take Pliatsikas (Christian) and Take Zoga (Christian), was sentenced by default to eighteen years' penal servitude for attempted murder. The brigand Zoga was arrested a short while afterwards and beheaded.

6. By decision No. 9 of May 6, 1925, of the Jannina Assize-Court, Hodja and his accomplices Christos Soulas (Christian) and Anastasios Georgiou (Christian) were condemned to death by default for kidnapping, blackmail and illegally carrying weapons.

7. By decision No. 23 of October 8, 1925, of the Jannina Assize-Court, Hodja and his accomplice Take Nikomani (Christian) were sentenced to death by default for brigandage.

The above shews that Hodja made no distinction between Christian and Moslem when choosing his accomplices or his victims.

No. 116

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 14, 1940

I am wondering anxiously whether the Italians contemplate immediate action against us, or whether they merely intend to raise the question of Tsamuria. So far, I have no tangible evidence at my disposal to enable me to answer the question.

In diplomatic circles it is taken for granted that Germany is opposed to a conflagration in the Balkans, and that it would not be possible for Italy alone to take upon herself such an initiative. They therefore incline to the opinion that Italy's intention is rather to raise the question of Tsamuria and to bully us into making concessions, as has been the case with Roumania.

It would, however, be a mistake to rely on the above conclusions, however plausible they may seem.

Reliable information seems to indicate that the plan for the invasion of England has for the moment been put aside. We cannot tell how far this modification in their military programme will affect the views of the Axis Powers and their general line of policy as known so far—more especially their policy in the Balkans. In addition, we have the fact of the Italian military concentrations on the Yugoslav frontier, as well as of the reinforcement of the Italian troops in Albania. The situation seems so uncertain and confused that every supposition is possible.

A clue to the situation, though not a conclusive proof, would be the degree to which Germany adopts Italy's point of view. If it is a case of a purely Italian initiative, the impression concerning our will to resist may prove an important factor. That is why the declaration made by Your Excellency to the Italian Minister was most appropriate to the occasion.

J. POLITIS

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No. 117

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 14, 1940

Since two days Italy has thrown off the mask. The unprecedented falsification of the facts and the clumsy concoction of a mass of vague, unfounded and calumnious accusations are proof that the Fascist Government at no time in the recent history of Greco-Italian relations have been really sincere.

Having tried in vain to convict us, by her recent representations, of belonging to the opposite side, Italy has been searching for a pretext enabling her to take up a hostile attitude towards us. The Italian papers even go so far as to divulge Italy's pretensions for immediate territorial concessions to Albania. Italy is now openly demanding the mutilation of Greece, and that without delay. Everything that has gone before has been a mere prelude to this new chapter.

J. POLITIS

No. 118

The Consul-General at Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 14, 1940

The Albanians, who know very well the kind of man Daout Hodja was, are quite apathetic towards the anti-Greek campaign launched by Italy through the Press and radio, even when cloaked beneath the disguise of Albanian irredentist claims.

The explanation is their dislike of the Italians, who, on their side, do not attempt to conceal their contempt for the Albanians.

ARGYROPOULOS

No. 119

The Vice-Consul at Argyrocastro to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 16, 1940

The murdered brigand had served for many years as a keeper on an estate at Saronia in the Vourko district. He constantly quarrelled with the shepherds and cattle-breeders, with whom he often used to come to blows. It is said that his murder was the consequence of a quarrel with some shepherds. Some years ago Daout Hodja served a sentence in prison for stealing.

NIKOLARÉÏZIS

No. 120

Official communiqué concerning the torpedoing of the light cruiser "Helle"

Yesterday morning, at 8.30, one of the units of the Fleet, the *Helle*, was torpedoed by a submarine of unknown nationality. At the time when she was hit she was lying at anchor about 800 metres outside the mole of Tinos harbour, where she had gone to take part in the celebration of the Feast of the Holy Virgin, and was "dressed" for the occasion.

Three torpedoes were fired at the *Helle*. One of these struck the vessel amidships, while the other two missed their mark and exploded

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against the mole. The submarine remained submerged and disappeared. The torpedo which struck the *Helle* exploded directly beneath the boiler, which had steam raised. As the result of the explosion, the boiler burst, simultaneously causing the oil fuel to escape and to catch fire. Consequently it was no longer possible for the vessel to get under way. The crew attempted to tow her into shallow water with the aid of the merchant vessels anchored inside the harbour. Unfortunately, the cables broke and, the fire having spread throughout the ship, her crew were forced to abandon her after having tried every possible means of saving her. The captain and officers were the last to leave the burning vessel, which sank at 9.45 a.m. The casualties amount to one man killed (Engineer Petty Officer Papanicolaou) and 29 injured. Among the civilian population gathered on the mole, several sustained slight injuries, and one Armenian woman died of heart-failure. So far there are no clues as to the nationality of the submarine which committed this act of aggression.

No. 121

The Minister in Rome to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 16, 1940

I am confirmed in my impression that Italy is trying, by means of threats, to draw Greece into an immediate discussion of territorial claims in Epirus, or else to obtain certain advantages of strategic importance for her war at sea, or both. Notwithstanding our declaration about the nationality of the submarine which torpedoed the *Helle* being unknown, diplomatic circles, the foreign newspaper correspondents, and even certain Italian circles, openly name the culprit. It is expected that Italy will resort to further acts of the same kind till we are in the right mood for discussion.

Failing sufficient evidence to the contrary, I am unable to exclude the possibility of an attack.

J. Politis.

No. 122

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 16, 1940

At to-day's meeting of foreign newspaper correspondents the Director of the Press Bureau stated that the sinking of the *Helle* was an English ruse intended to provoke a conflagration in the Balkans and to embitter still further the relations between Greece and Italy. This was proved, he said, by the fact that, without even allowing the necessary time for verification, the British hastened to broadcast that no British submarine had been in the neighbourhood. Italy, true to the well-known Italian tradition of honesty, had allowed three days to elapse before announcing, after due investigation, that no ship had been reported to the Naval General Staff as having been sunk nor had any Italian submarine been in the neighbourhood. Questioned about the date when the torpedoing occurred, the Director replied that it took place two or three days ago.

J. Politis

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No. 123

The Consul-General at Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 17, 1940

The Press campaign directed against the person of His Majesty the King and the Prime Minister is still continuing.

The Albanian people regard with complete indifference the loudly trumpeted Italian schemes of conquest, notwithstanding the constantly repeated Italian promises about the liberation of the "Irredeemed" Albanians.

ARGYROPOULOS

No. 124

Statement made by the Captain of the ss. "Frinton" before Commander S. Patsifas and Lieutenant-Commander B. Vasilakis, of the Royal Naval General Staff

August 17, 1940

On August 15, 1940, at 6.20 p.m., we were steaming in the neighbourhood of Bali, Crete, seven miles E. of Panormos and at a distance of two miles from the coast, when we were twice attacked by a couple of aircraft. The latter approached the ship from astern, flying in the same direction in which she was moving. In order to evade the attack the ship altered course ninety degrees to starboard.

Through our glasses we could clearly make out the distinctive Italian marks on the tails of the planes.

No. 125

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 18, 1940

I am informed that two days ago the Italian Press were instructed gradually to tone down the campaign directed against us.

J. POLITIS

No. 126

The Vice-Consul at Valona to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 19, 1940

Daout Hodja had the reputation of being a smuggler and a cattle-thief.

GEORGIADES

No. 127

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 20, 1940

According to information from a first-rate source, Germany has intervened in Rome and has signified her wish that peace should on no account be disturbed in the Balkans. According to the same source, Germany has indeed recognized the Mediterranean as Italy's special sphere of action, which in itself implies a certain right of initiative on Italy's part, but as a Greco-Italian conflict, in view of the probable intervention of Bulgaria and Turkey, would be bound to react on the

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general war policy of the Axis, the matter in this respect ceases to be an exclusively Mediterranean problem, and on this account Germany has demanded that Italy should avoid any action which might lead to a conflagration. This somewhat subtle distinction, in the opinion of my informant, means that Germany's objections are confined to the case of military action only, whereas she continues under an obligation to tolerate and support Italy's efforts to solve, by diplomatic means, the questions regarded by the latter as affecting her vital interests. The same information states that Italy has asked Germany to recognize, as one of her vital interests, her claim to Corfu and the opposite coast of Epirus.

J. POLITIS

No. 128

The Consul-General at Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 20, 1940

Transport of all kinds, especially of military stores, going South via Elbasan has continued all night.

Addressing a gathering of the Albanian Civil Guard summoned for the purpose, the Italians said that they were taking advantage of the present circumstances in order to make Albania a present of Epirus, and that Greece would not put up any resistance, a situation similar to that of Danemark being thus created.

ARGYROPOULOS

No. 129

Procès-Verbal

At the Naval Arsenal on board the cruiser *Averoff* this 21st day of August, 1940,

Rear Admiral E. Cavadias, Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet,
Captain A. Hadjopoulos,
Lieut.-Commander C. Doussis,
Engineer-Lieutenant A. Steriopoulos, and
Lieutenant (Junior) C. Levantinos,

in their capacity of members of the Commission set up by virtue of Confidential Order No. 407, dated 16th August, 1940, issued by the Commander of the Fleet, having minutely examined the fragments recovered in their presence of the torpedoes which exploded on the 15th August, 1940, near the mole of the town of Tinos, report as follows:

(1) The fragments clearly belong to two torpedoes, one of 45 centimetre* and the other of 53 centimetre** diameter.

(2) The fragments of the 45 cm. torpedo were found near the breach in the mole.

(3) The fragments of the 53 cm. torpedo were found at a greater distance.

(4) The 45 cm. torpedo was the second fired, after the one which struck the *Helle*; it is this torpedo which caused the breach in the mole.

(5) The 53 cm. torpedo was the third torpedo fired and exploded on striking a reef near the mole.

(6) As regards the fragments of the first torpedo, these have not been

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* 18 inch. ** 21 inch.

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recovered, and no search has been made for them, since they must be inside the sunken vessel or near it, at a great depth, and neither the necessary means nor time were available.

(7) It was evident that all the fragments recovered had only been in the sea for a short time.

(8) The following is a detailed description of the fragments:

(A) Torpedo of 45 cm. diameter.

The recovered fragments were:

(a) Complete tail with horizontal and vertical rudders, together with gearing transmitting the drive to the propeller shafts. These pieces bear the following marks:

On the two propellers: $\frac{IT}{109}$ 11529 R.W.

On the tail casing and beside various openings:

— UNIONE TIM. ORIZZ.

— T. O.
UNIONE

— OLIO

— OLIO

— UNIONE TIM. VERT.

Near the point where it joins the after end of the buoyancy chamber are the following distinguishing marks: RW $\frac{IT}{109}$ and 11529.

(b) A large piece of the compressed air vessel 9 mm. thick.

This piece, at the point where it joins the water vessel and near the T, bears the following lettering:

PROVA OLIO 200 KG/GM²

(B) Torpedo of 53 cm. diameter.

Whitehead type. Twin cylinder reciprocating engine, one of the first of this type constructed.

(a) Tail with rudders and both propellers.

On the tail the following lettering can be read: $\frac{IT}{92}$ R.W. 15630

On the first propeller: $\frac{IT}{92}$ 15630

and on the second propeller: $\frac{IT}{92}$ 15630.

(b) The after-part of the propeller shafts, together with the locking nuts of the propellers, which were found in a worn condition.

On the propeller-guard is marked the number 15630.

(c) Crank shaft of the engine with the bearings and a piece ofthe connecting rod.

On the connecting rod is mark $\overset{\smile}{+}$, the number 15630 and the letters R.M.

On the crank shaft the number 15630 and R.M. and the number 166 with the mark $\overset{\smile}{+}$.

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On the upper part of the bearing the number 15630 R.M. and the mark .

(d) Piece of the rear end of the buoyancy chamber, near the tail of the gyroscope, with no markings.

(e) Two pieces of the water vessel, 5 mm. thick.

(f) Part of the engine room with the following lettering beside each of a series of openings:

— (?) LTRO POMPETTA (one letter is clearly missing from the first word, and a question mark has therefore been inserted).

— REGOLATORE ALTA P.

— REGOLATORE BAS (piece missing).

— OLIO B.P.

— OLIO A.P.

— MODERATORE, and beside the rear opening: (?) ETTO QUADRUPLO (one letter missing from first word).

(9) All the above fragments have been sealed in the presence of the Commission with the Seal of the Royal Navy (B. ✠ N.), with the date.

(10) All the fragments have been placed in two cases, one for each torpedo, and sealed.

(11) In witness whereof the present *procès-verbal* has been drawn up and signed as follows:

(*Signatures follow*)

N.B.—In accordance with the Prime Minister's positive instructions, the above Report was kept strictly secret. It was only after Italy had launched her attack on Greece, that its contents were made public in the following *communiqué* issued by the Naval General Staff on October 30, 1940:

1. With reference to the torpedoing of the cruiser *Helle* on August 15, 1940, at 8.25 a.m. off the port of Tinos, the Ministry of Marine states that the act was committed by an Italian submarine.

2. The details of the enquiry, which succeeded in establishing beyond all doubt the identity of the submarine as being Italian, are as follows:

3. Immediately after the torpedoing of the *Helle*, the Naval General Staff, failing other means of ascertaining the submarine's identity, decided to have a search made for the fragments of the exploded torpedoes which, it was hoped, would supply the necessary evidence for establishing their origin.

4. A Commission was accordingly appointed without delay, by order of the Ministry No. 3185/427 dated August 15, 1940, composed of an Admiral, as President, and a number of senior officers, all of them being torpedo- and engineer-officers. The Commission's terms of reference were to recover the fragments of the exploded torpedo and to draw up a report stating with strict accuracy the results of their investigation and giving a detailed description of the fragments recovered.

5. The Commission on the following day began a careful search at the spot where the torpedoes had exploded, also employing the services of divers. A large number of fragments, of all sizes, were recovered from the bottom of the sea, and a list of these was drawn up.

6. The fragments found belong to two different torpedoes, one of 45 centimetre and the other of 53 centimetre diameter.

It should here be noted that nearly all the components of a torpedo are invariably stamped by the manufacturers with the makers' number, as well as with the distinguishing marks of origin.

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7. It was, therefore, possible to reach the conclusion that both torpedoes were of Italian manufacture: that the one of 45 cm. diameter belonged to the Italian type 109 and bore the makers' number 11529; that the other of 53 cm. diameter was of the 92 type, bearing the number 11529; that the other of 53 cm. diameter was of the 92 type, bearing the number 15630.

8. The attached photographs clearly show, at the points marked with a red cross, some of the inscriptions in Italian on the fragments recovered, as well as the makers' numbers, as for instance: UNIONE TIM. VERT. (TIMONI VERTICALI) POMPETTA... $\frac{IT}{109}$ 11529 etc.

9. It is absolutely certain that the torpedoes in question were not sold by the Italian manufacturers to a foreign State, as, had this been the case, it would have been an easy matter to trace the foreign State's identity through the makers' number of the torpedoes.

10. The above proves conclusively that the cruiser *Helle* was sunk by Italian torpedoes fired by an Italian submarine.

This fact had not until now been officially divulged, on grounds of political expediency, grounds which to-day have naturally ceased to exist.

No. 130

The Under-Secretary of State for the Press to the Governors-General and Préfets of the Kingdom

August 21, 1940

Please issue orders to the press censors forbidding all mention in the Press concerning the nationality of the submarine which torpedoed the light cruiser *Helle*, and generally all news relative to the torpedoing of the vessel.

NIKOLOUDIS

No. 131

Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes"

August 21, 1940

With regard to the reports published in the Albanian newspaper *Tomori* and reproduced by the Agence Stefani, according to which the Greek authorities have for several months been organizing armed bands with the object of persecuting the Albanians of Tsamuria, we are in a position to state that the reports in question are absolutely false. The entire population of Greece, without exception, enjoys a peaceful existence free from all intimidation or other molestation, thanks to the paternal and vigilant administration of the Hellenic Government. Not a single armed band has been formed on Greek soil for any purpose whatsoever. The discipline which prevails both among the officials and the population excludes any such possibility.

No. 132

Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes"

August 22, 1940

We find ourselves obliged to revert to the rumours which are being persistently spread by the Albanian Press and the Agence Stefani concerning the alleged formation in Epirus of bands under the command of an entirely imaginary Greek Colonel of Gendarmerie and about the alleged distribution of arms by the Greek authorities with the object of terrorizing the population on either side of the Greco-Albanian frontier.

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We are in a position to deny these fantastic stories which would do credit to the imagination of a writer of light fiction. It is inconceivable that such charges should be brought against the Hellenic Government. The reported visit to the frontier of certain foreigners escorted by Greek officers is also devoid of any foundation. As to the insinuations against the Greek Courts, the prestige enjoyed by the Greek Judiciary and their high conception of justice are such that insinuations of this nature can carry absolutely no weight.

No. 133

The General Staff to the Prime Minister

August 22, 1940

To complete our previous reports on Italian concentrations facing our frontier in Albania, we have the honour to bring to your notice the following movements:

(1) Since 18.8.1940 the main part of the 131st Mechanized Division has moved from Tirana towards our frontier as follows:

(a) A detachment comprising:
- 1 battalion of Bersaglieri (200 motor-cycles—800 men).
- 1 battalion carried in motor transport (1,000 men).
- 80 tanks.
- 6 batteries of 75 mm. field artillery (1,200 men), transported from Valona to Tepeleni, where they are supposed to have arrived on the 20.8.1940. The movement was effected in 500 motor vehicles, which carried the whole of the material and men.

(b) A detachment comprising:
- 1 battalion of Bersaglieri (250 motor-cycles—1,000 men).
- 50 tanks moved via Elbasan and Korytsa to Erseka, where they arrived on the 19th and 20th inst.

(2) On the 20.8.1940 a group of heavy artillery, composed of 3 batteries, reached Korytsa, coming from Elbasan.

A body of 400 cavalry also arrived at Korytsa, bringing the total strength of the cavalry forces stationed in that town up to 1,000.

(3) The VIIIth Division reports that the 23rd Italian Division (7 infantry battalions, 12 batteries of light artillery), previously stationed in the Tepeieni-Klissoura district, has been moved forward South of the Argyrokastro-Premeti line.

(4) The VIIIth Division reports that, in addition to the battalion of Bersaglieri and the 50 tanks mentioned above, one infantry battalion, previously stationed in the Korytsa district, has also arrived at Erseka.

(5) According to an unconfirmed report, it appears that certain units, or possibly the whole of the Italian 19th Division, are moving up from the Elbasan-Librasdi district towards Korytsa.

(6) 400 Alpini, in motor vehicles, are reported as having passed through Tirana on 19.8.1940, on the way to Korytsa. Two hundred of these have already arrived at Korytsa, whence they have moved on to Erseka. The other 200 are still on the way.

(7) The VIIIth Division reports that rumours are circulating in Albania of an imminent invasion of Greece to take place between the 23rd–25th of this month.

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The conclusion to be drawn from the above is that Italy is taking up an offensive disposition on our frontier, directed primarily against Epirus and secondarily towards Macedonia.

PAPAGOS

No. 134

The Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Royal Legations in Berlin and Rome

August 23, 1940

In view of the continued concentration of troops on the Albanian border, we have been obliged, as a measure of elementary precaution, to call up a few categories (not classes) of reservists, belonging to the frontier districts, in order to reinforce the troops guarding the frontier. There has been no mobilization, but only a simple reinforcement of the garrisons along the frontier.

METAXAS

No. 135

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 23, 1940

Replying to the representative of a Great Power who asked him if there was any truth in the rumour that the delivery of an Italian ultimatum to Greece was imminent, the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that this was entirely inaccurate and that the question (i.e., the tension between Italy and Greece over Albania) remained within the dominion of the press. The Minister added that he was optimistic in the hope for a peaceful solution.

The question about an ultimatum was also put by a foreign correspondent at to-day's meeting of press representatives, and was contradicted.

In communicating the foregoing, I do most earnestly recommend the greatest possible measure of vigilance without giving provocation. On principle I distrust Italy's assurances, in view of the fact that similar assurances were given to Albania only a few hours before the invasion.

The intervention of Germany proves that there was no previous understanding between the two members of the Axis. It also proves that Germany suspected Italy's intention of not stopping short of force. However, Germany's objections cannot constitute a reliable security for us, as they are related to certain war conditions and might cease to exist should circumstances change. However inferior Italy's position in the Axis from a dynamic point of view may be, she is nevertheless a necessary member, and this fact enables Italian policy to exploit the situation. Italy has been involved in a longer war than she suspected, and is already beginning to feel the consequences. She is in urgent need of some substantial gain. Moreover, the strong animosity of Italy's rulers against Greece, whom they consider to be an obstacle to their ambitions, has been constantly evident ever since the rise of Fascism. Italy is afraid of missing what is perhaps an unique opportunity. Information reaches me to the effect that the military forces in Albania are being continually strengthened.

Rightly or wrongly, Italy believes that relations between Turkey and

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Russia are not good, and that this fact neutralizes Turkish influence. Italy is thus perhaps led to the conclusion that a rapid occupation of those parts of Greece in which she is interested would place before the world an accomplished fact. I do not know what importance Italy attaches to the danger of a simultaneous occupation of other parts of Greece by the British, seeing that she does not appear to intend facing the latter on the sea.

For all the above reasons, and although at present an aggression seems improbable, it is preferable for us to be guided, in regulating our affairs, by the principle that an aggression is possible at any moment. The discovery that the enterprise is not an easy one will do more than all else to check Italian impetuosity.

J. POLITIS

No. 136

The Vice-Consul in charge of the Royal Consulate at Korytsa to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 23, 1940

The Albanian Minister of Justice, Djafer Upi, arrived here last Monday. I am informed from a reliable source that the object of his visit is to form a band recruited from among the rougher elements in his home district of Erseka with a view to carrying out acts of terrorism in the regions of Konitsa and Castoria.

CHIMARIOS

No. 137

Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes"

August 25, 1940

In a series of *communiqués* the Agence d'Athènes was able to disprove the suddenly trumped-up charges published in the Albanian Press and reproduced by the Agence Stefani at the time of the recent press campaign worked up over the affair of an ordinary criminal.

The Albanian paper *Tomori* now returns to the charge and continues its indictment in the form of a daily serial story. The Agence Stefani, in reporting this fresh batch of accusations published by the *Tomori*, refers to the latter's complaint that the Agence d'Athènes has failed to submit satisfactory counter-proofs. We greatly regret that we are once more obliged to reply to these sensational charges:

(1) Sefket Osman Taka, of Philiates, who committed suicide on April 23, 1939, is represented by the Albanian newspaper as having been murdered. The following is the result of the official enquiry held at the time of his death: Taka, together with his two brothers, Fein and Isouf, suffered from hereditary insanity. Steps had been taken for him to be sent to the Corfu Asylum, when he suddenly committed suicide. The above facts are stated in full detail in the sworn statements made by his widow and relatives, Isa Veli Taka and Dervish Ali Tsou. The dossier also contains a long report, dated April 23, 1939, signed by the two doctors who certified the suicide.

(2) No such person as Major Ioannis Canga Darsoulis has served in the district in question, whether in the Gendarmerie or in the Greek Army.

(3) With regard to the alleged rape of Mehmed Yacoup's daughter,

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the enquiry held after she had been killed by her father on account of her disreputable conduct proved that the murdered woman was a nymphomaniac and led a thoroughly dissolute life.

(4) It is a fact that Agous Darkin, Fergat Muhamet and Ahmet Kapun were deported for several months to the Ægean Islands for offences against the Public Security Regulations, which are applicable to all Greek citizens alike.

As regards the other vague accusations about certain persons having been sentenced for various small police court offences, it would be preposterous to expect the judicial and police authorities of one of the provinces of the kingdom to exempt the inhabitants under their jurisdiction from the operation of the laws which govern civilized society.

No. 138

Memorandum of a conversation between the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Italian Minister

August 27, 1940

During the conversation I had to-day with the Italian Minister, I renewed the assurance I gave him on August 13 that the Hellenic Government was willing to agree to the extradition of the two murderers of Daout Hodja, and asked him to let me know the probable date of the Italian demand for extradition, as the two accused men were being detained without a writ in preventive custody.

The Minister replied that should he not hear from Rome within two days, he would take upon himself to cable to his Government for information.*

No. 139

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 27, 1940

I consider it expedient to stress the fact that my conversation with Signor Benini, Under-Secretary of State for Albanian Affairs, took place on the 7th inst., i.e., only four days before the Italian Press instituted its campaign against Greece. This conversation is remarkable in that the Under-Secretary, while advising me of the tension in Greco-Italian relations, due to other causes, did not refer at all to Greco-Albanian relations concerning which he was most competent to speak, nor did he let it appear that there might have been any complaints on the subject against Greece. Moreover, when I referred to irredentist manifestations on the part of Albanians during Count Ciano's visit to Albania, Signor Benini made no attempt whatever to justify these in the light of our attitude towards the Albanian element in the province of Tsamuria, but on the contrary condemned them as the "doings of students," and spoke of a "subsequent denial."

It would be natural to suppose that the Under-Secretary of State for Albanian Affairs could not on August 7 be unaware of a situation which the Italian Press only four days later described as unbearable and as not admitting of being prolonged, seeing that the oppression exercised by

* No demand for extradition has ever reached the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

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Greece against the Albanians of Tsamuria had, according to these allegations, brought the latter to the point of desperation. The fact that the Under-Secretary was not aware of such a situation is a further proof that it never existed, but that the charges brought against Greece were clumsily forged at the last moment in order to serve the secret political ends of Italy's leaders.

J. POLITIS

No. 140

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 27, 1940

During the last weeks that preceded the Hodja incident, two of the most important Italian journals, the *Giornale d'Italia* and *Popolo d'Italia*, had dropped hints about the utilization of Greek ports by the British in their operations against Italy. However, notwithstanding the doubts cast, the Italian Press continued to observe a relatively decent attitude towards us, avoiding all expression of ill-feeling or the putting forward of excessive demands as, for instance, in the case of Yugoslavia, on whom the demand was made not to publish even the official British *communiqués*. On the contrary, the Italian Press appeared to be satisfied with the attitude of official Greece and of the Greek Press, and was tending to create the impression among Italian public opinion that Greece's policy, too, was gravitating more and more in the direction of the Axis as a result of Germany's and Italy's great military successes.

These friendly dispositions were even more prominently displayed by the Italian Press on the occasion of the Fourth of August, when, in contrast to the complete silence observed during the two previous years, it published a statement by the Agence Stefani warmly praising the work of the National Government. Besides this, the Roma Radio Station, in its Greek broadcast on that day, addressed a greeting to the régime of General Metaxas in a talk which not only stressed the great achievements of our Government and the Premier's statesmanlike qualities, but also added that, thanks to M. Metaxas, Greece was already within the orbit of the Axis and, generally speaking, of the New European Order.

Seven days later, however, there began the virulent campaign against our country over the Hodja incident and the pro-British attitude of the National Government.

This sudden *volte-face*, an event by no means uncommon in the changing moods of Italian policy, came as somewhat of a surprise even to the Italian public, for, whatever action was expected on the part of the Government in the Balkans, was rather in the direction of Yugoslavia, towards whom the Italian Press had repeatedly displayed feelings of animosity.

I think it will help to make things clear if I give a survey of this Press campaign. By putting it in diary form, it will make it easier to discern the methods adopted and the various phases through which this Italian crusade has passed.

August 11

The Italian Radio Station gives the signal for the alert, in its night broadcast, with the Agence Stefani's now notorious statement from Tirana.

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It denounces the "barbarous" murder of the great Albanian patriot by "Greek agents." This murder is represented as being one in the series of massacres and other acts of oppression by which Greece is vainly endeavouring to Hellenize the population of the Albanian territory under her rule.

It is explained that the territory in question "is comprised between the present Greco-Albanian frontier, the coast of the Ionian Sea as far as Preveza, and the province of Jannina."

August 12

All the Italian newspapers reproduce the Hodja incident, as given out by the Agence Stefani, under senational headings, and the Rome Station repeats the *communiqué* on the same subject in all its broadcasts throughout the day. Simultaneously, the leading Italian propagandists are trying to represent Greece as cherishing the ambition of occupying Albania and as being in league with England for the attainment of this end. Attempts are also made to oppose, or at least to represent the Greek People as being opposed to the National Government. For instance, publicity is given through the press to an alleged telegram from Athens about the enormous impression made among the Greek public by the Stefani *communiqué's* revelation of certain facts which the Greek Government is represented as having tried to conceal by means of the censorship.

The telegram further states that, simultaneously with the granting of the British guarantee, the British Government promised the creation of a Greek kingdom in Epirus, comprising Albania. In conclusion the telegram claims that in Greek circles people are asking themselves whether the neutrality of the Metaxas Government is not purely formal, seeing that the activities of British agents on the Albanian border go on unhindered, and that there are two hundred petrol depots at various points on the Greek coast and islands for the use of the British naval forces.

August 13

Leading Italian circles persist in their futile attempt to provoke or represent as imminent an uprising among the people of Greece and the Greek Army against the Government. Otherwise, no explanation can be given of another malicious invention, again in the form of a telegram from Athens, which, besides being published here, was broadcast in Greek to our country by the Italian Radio Station. The telegram announces that 250 officers made a protest against the Prime Minister's foreign policy, declaring, *inter alia*, that it was to Greece's advantage to side with the Axis before, rather than after, the latter's triumph. This action on the part of the officers, it is pointed out, is not unrelated to M. Metaxas' recent speech, interpreted in Athens as friendly to England, and is represented as having placed the Government in a difficult position. It is remarkable that the author of this malicious publication, wishing to explain why the Premier's speech was considered friendly to Britain, should be unable to produce any arguments. He merely states that General Metaxas did actually speak of neutrality in a war which "is going to last a long time," and that the Agence d'Athènes reproduced articles from English newspapers in which General Metaxas was called the most eminent statesman of the Near East after Kemal.

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Side by side with the above is quoted an article from the Albanian newspaper *Tomori*, in which the Greek people are advised to bear in mind that behind Albania there stands Italy, and not to put their trust in the invincibility of the British Navy, as their leaders, "led by the vacillating and Hamlet-like Metaxas," would have them believe. "Crimes," proclaims the *Tomori*, "cannot be further tolerated, and nothing can prevent the enforcement of a just settlement that will ensure a lasting peace."

Signor Gayda, who habitually acts as the mouthpiece of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for interpreting official Italian views, publishes a long article entitled "Justice for Albania", in which he makes the following statements:

1.—The murder of Hodja was decided and planned in Athens on account of the victim's patriotic activities.

2.—The Greek Government does not respect the independence and political boundaries of Albania. On the contrary, responsible Government and military circles are at work to undermine same by threats and intrigues, mingled with gross insults against the Italian armed forces. The Greeks, who are just as bombastic as the Poles, are spreading the rumour throughout Albanian territory that one Greek is worth at least ten Italians.

3.—In Tsamuria and other Albanian territories under Greek rule, the Albanians, far from being a mere minority, are actually in the majority.

4.—Italy wishes for the friendship, co-operation, or, at least, conscious self-restraint of Greece, but the Greek Government refuses to make any response to Italy's sincere feelings. On the contrary, ever since the first days of Italy's entry into the war, notwithstanding Signor Mussolini's declaration, Greece has intensified her subversive activities on the Albanian frontiers and has offered to help the British forces by letting the latter have the free use of Greek ports and coasts, thus becoming the avowed accomplice, the tacit ally and the *agent provocateur* of Great Britain.

5.—Believing that Britain's power is inexhaustible, Greece started to play a double and dangerous game, culminating in the outrage against Albania and the Albanian People. A grave and fatal mistake, for in one of his speeches Count Ciano had unreservedly proclaimed that Albania's frontiers were sacred to Italy, and sacred also was the duty of defending them. Obviously Greece had not taken these plain words at their true value, but had chosen to embark on a dangerous course—a course full of blunders, intrigues and provocative acts directed against the Axis Powers—and to participate in the policy of violating national liberties.

At this decisive moment of European history such deliberate blunders are not to be tolerated.

August 14

This is the day on which the campaign of the Italian Press reaches its climax. Nearly all the newspapers publish articles more or less developing Signor Gayda's views, but in an even more violent tone.

Greece is accused of having always pursued an anti-Italian policy, and of having failed to realize—owing to her under-estimating Italy's power—that the period of oppression of the Albanians was at an end.

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Nor had she appreciated the guarantee given her by Italy, but had preferred a policy of provocation towards the Axis Powers without taking warning from the fate which had befallen Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France.

Italy, it is added, cannot tolerate any further the oppression of the Albanians; it is fully time that justice was also rendered to Albania by an appropriate revision of the territorial clauses of the treaties.

The *Messagero* goes further and observes that the restoration of Albania's territorial integrity must be achieved without further delay.

The *Tevere* predicts "fatal possibilities" for Greece.

The *Popolo di Roma* dwells on the civilization brought by Italy to the shores of the Adriatic and Corfu under Venetian rule, and adds that the whole region from the Adriatic to the Black Sea is comprised in the scheme for the reconstruction of Europe.

The *Tribuna* relates how Greece succeeded in usurping Albanian territories and how she is endeavouring to Hellenize them, and calls upon the Greek Government to explain the ulterior aims of their present policy, as well as the meaning of certain acts, with the reminder that there are mistakes, dearly paid for under any circumstances, which at the present juncture become fatal.

In the *Regime Fascista* Signor Farinacci states that the parading of Hodja's head from village to village, a sight which in other countries would cause horror, is quite a normal practice in Greece, and that the Armenian massacres pale before the Albanian massacres committed by the Greeks. He also mentions that England and France gave Tsamuria to Greece for strategic reasons directed against Italy, and in conclusion warns Greece that Italy will not tolerate crimes like the murder of Hodja and is ready to settle accounts both old and new by "radical measures".

Reverting to the same subject, Signor Gayda publishes another long article in which: (1) He claims that the murder of Hodja is not an isolated and accidental incident, but forms part of a wider plot between Greece and Great Britain directed against Albania and Italy for the purpose of creating a military diversion at the expense of the Axis Powers, who, therefore, cannot remain indifferent. (2) He declares that the unredeemed Albanian territory under Greek rule stretches from the Adriatic coast along the southern boundaries of Albania and Yugoslavia, and contains 99,895 Albanians and only 22,430 Greeks. (3) He accuses Greece not only of trying to Hellenize the Albanians by methods of terrorism, but also of having always aimed at the annexation of Southern Albania, and insists that Greek imperialism constitutes one of the most acute sources of chronic unrest in the Balkans. Hodja's murder, he concludes, is the culminating point in the long succession of political intrigues and acts of terrorism directed from Athens against Albania, and which, it was hoped, would be favoured by the state of war with British help.

More than usually malicious, offensive, but above all significant, is a fresh telegraphic concoction from Athens, in which the Greek Government are accused of wishing, by muzzling the press and renewing their declarations of friendship, to continue their ambiguous and nominally neutral attitude, when in reality their attitude is always—in substance, if not in form—animated by a spirit of partiality against Italy.

Those responsible for Greek policy, it goes on, continue to pursue

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a thoroughly "Greek" policy, that is, a policy which is "tortuous" in the extreme, on the one hand hastening to give formal guarantees of neutrality, on the other behaving as if they were a British protectorate.

Finally, further articles from the *Tomori* are reproduced, mentioning, *inter alia*, the arrest of various Albanians of Tsamuria for refusing to become agents of the Greek Intelligence Service.

August 15

In the harbour of Tinos a submarine of unknown nationality torpedoes and sinks the *Helle*.

The Italian papers which, owing to the holiday, only came out in the morning, contained no fresh comments on the Albanian question, but tried to create the impression that Greece's responsibility was admitted in foreign countries. Thus, in their news, they make out that complete solidarity exists between Germany, Hungary and Italy over the Greco-Albanian incident. Stress is laid on the favourable attitude of the Bulgarian press and the friendly response given to Italian views by the Roumanian press.

As to the reactions in Greece itself, conversations are alleged to have taken place between General Metaxas and the Italian and German Ministers, and the Greek press is stated to have adopted a more moderate tone with the intention of straightening out our relations with Italy.

August 16

Owing to yesterday's holiday the newspapers came out at noon. They reproduce more malicious comments from the *Tomori* rehabilitating the memory of the "martyr" Hodja in reply to the "slanderous" allegations of the Greek Press. They do not even spare the person of His Majesty the King, who is represented as being more English than Greek. The *Popolo di Roma* underlines these comments in a short article in which it stresses that King George's and his Government's flirtations with England are exceedingly ill-timed and risky.

Strangely enough the Italian papers say nothing about the torpedoing of the *Helle*. The mystery surrounding this silence is cleared up in the afternoon; the afternoon papers, in giving the above news, accompany it by comments throwing the responsibility on Great Britain. The explanation given is that if the sinking of the *Helle* had not been the work of a British submarine, British propaganda would not have been in a position to spread the news immediately after the torpedoing took place and almost before the Greek Government itself learnt of it. They add that Great Britain committed this act, hoping that in the present strained state of Greco-Italian relations Greece would put the blame on Italy and thus be driven into taking action against her.

Signor Gayda further declares that the problem of Greco-Italian relations arising out of the murder of Hodja and the other revelations is quite distinct from any other question which might arise as the result of Great Britain's exploitation of Greece, and must receive a satisfactory solution. Italy will not brook any compromise in this matter.

In the columns of the *Giornale d'Italia* Bulgaria is represented as favouring the Italian point of view, whilst doubts are expressed as to

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whether the statement of the *Yeni Sabah*, to the effect that Turkey would intervene on Greece's side in the event of the latter being attacked, really represents the views of the Turkish Government.

August 17

Nearly all the newspapers comment on the sinking of the *Helle*, repeating Signor Gayda's allegations as to England's responsibility and his view that the question arising out of the murder of Hodja should be separated from any other problem. It is emphasized that the rendering of full justice to Albania is imperative. Signor Farinacci's newspaper, the *Regime Fascista*, adds that Greece had not yet paid the English shipbuilders for the *Helle*, and therefore the loss sustained through the sinking of the ship by the British is divided.

Signor Mussolini's personal organ publishes an article by Signor Polverelli, a Deputy and formerly Head of the Press Bureau attached to the Prime Minister's office, asserting that Greece's responsibility has already been established both in the matter of Hodja's murder and of the attempt on the part of the British Secret Service to foment an insurrectional movement in Albania. The question, he adds, arising out of these two acts calls for a settlement. Greece had every interest in letting the injustices inflicted by the Peace Treaties on Albania, as well as the violations of Greek neutrality in favour of Great Britain during the present war, be forgotten. Now these problems have come to a head, and Athens must be called to book. We therefore (he adds) have reason to believe that the Italian Government intend asking Greece, within the next few days, to clear up her attitude once and for all. The British Press is urging Greece to resist, thus once more playing the same game that has already led into disaster all the States that placed their faith in Great Britain's counsels and guarantee.

The Italian newspapers represent the Yugoslav Press as criticizing the alleged pro-British policy of Greece and as advising the latter to release herself from the British guarantee.

Stress is also laid on the fact that, in Germany, too, the sinking of the *Helle* is attributed to Mr. Churchill, who is represented as wishing to spread the war to the Balkans.

August 18

The provocative articles of the *Tomori* are reproduced.

August 19

Great prominence is given, under senational headlines, to the gross attacks of the *Tomori* condemning the "bloodthirsty brutality" of Greek officials and the attempts by the Greek Government to alter the ethnological character of Tsamuria by settling Greek refugees there. These articles are full of slanderous statements about the Greek Army and of insults directed against the Greek People, who are represented as being vain, with an aptitude for commerce because they are accustomed to swindling; as being unwarlike and entirely lacking in those qualities of straightforwardness and generosity which distinguish warlike nations; and, finally, as skilled in the arts of treachery and brutality.

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August 20

"Tsamuria an inferno! A long chain of crimes, the fruit of Greek megalomania!" Under such headings as these, new charges are brought by the *Tomori*, stating, amongst others, that 80 Albanian notables from a certain village were shut up in a church, where the Greek authorities burnt them alive!

August 21

A sensational telegram of the Agence Stefani from Tirana published to-day says that the Albanian people are all in a state of agnonized suspense because of Greece having organized in Epirus a large band of *comitajis* under the leadership of a brigand named Kotso Diro (?), for the extermination of the Albanian minority. At the same time Signor Gayda publishes a leading article emphasizing that the *Tomori's* revelations confirm the existence, as between Italy, Albania and Greece, of an unsolved problem, and that Italy is entitled to demand a final clearing up of the situation in the name of the principle of nationalities and of Balkan order. Not only Tsamuria, he adds, but all the regions where Albanians are in a majority as well, i.e., part of the Jannina district, constitute the elements of this problem, which anyhow calls for a final solution.

Going on, he observes that it would appear at least strange if the Axis Powers, after having done all in their power to promote appeasement between certain Balkan States at the price of very heavy territorial sacrifices, were to tolerate the continuance, in other regions of much more vital importance to themselves, of conditions which are contrary to the rights of nationality and a disgrace to civilization, and moreover such as to threaten the new order in the Balkans in a yet more acute form. Pending this indispensable solution, Signor Gayda thinks fit to review the attitude of Greece and England. He pretends that Greece is pushing forward her policy of Hellenization partly in order to represent Albanian claims as being unfounded, and partly to provoke Italy, and so comes to the conclusion that Greece, in conjunction with Great Britain, is planning an invasion of Albanian territory. He thereupon sums up as follows: "One thing is certain—Italy must counter this Anglo-Greek plan of aggression by a policy of firmness which, while not in search of adventures, is nevertheless ready to defend Albania's national rights and the cause of order in the Balkans".

The most characteristic statement published to-day is a message from Belgrade, in which the opinion attributed to Yugoslav circles should rather be interpreted as a reflexion of Italian views and as revealing what the Italians conceive to be a suitable solution for the "existing Italo-Albanian question." According to the correspondents of the Yugoslav papers, states the message, Greek circles during the last few days have avoided putting too tragic a construction on the state of Italo-Greek relations. The fact that Italy is allowing Greek ships to use the Mediterranean encourages the Greek Government to persevere in this course, in spite of British pressure. One may therefore look forward to an improvement in Italo-Greek relations, always provided, however, that Greece adopts towards Italy the same attitude as Roumania has adopted towards Germany, that is, by disavowing the British guarantee and entering the sphere of independent collaboration with Italy.

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August 22

This morning the Agence Stefani published a communication repeating a lot of nonsense from the *Tomori* about the organization of fresh *comitaji* bands, the drawing up of proscription lists, and the terrible sufferings of the Albanian population through the neglect and various restrictive measures imposed by the Greek authorities. On the same day a second *communiqué* was issued by the Agence Stefani containing fresh charges brought by the *Tomori*: abolition of the educational privileges of the Albanian population, methods of terrorism applied by the Chief of the Gendarmerie, Jambetta (?), arrests, ill-treatment of the prisoners, mysterious disappearance of an Albanian man of letters named Kiakis (?), the forming of a band under the leadership of a certain Economis (?) for the purpose of invading the Argyrocastro and Korytsa districts with the object of terrorizing the Albanian population, and so on.

August 23

The campaign of the Italian newspapers fed from the columns of the *Tomori* continues. The former reproduce that paper's information about the distribution of arms to the Greek inhabitants of Tsamuria and the Pindus having been intensified during the last two days, and about the arrival of a certain colonel of Gendarmerie at Jannina to assume command of the *comitaji* bands which are being feverishly organized.

In the afternoon a further accusation is reproduced from the *Tomori*, from which it appears that, according to facts recently come to light, an Albanian patriot named Taka, who was found hanged last May, had not committed suicide, as at the time asserted by the Greek authorities, but had, on the contrary, been murdered on account of his patriotic activities.

At the same time opinions and suggestions are attributed to Belgrade circles and the Yugoslav Press which again appear rather to reflect the views of the Italians themselves and are in the nature of indirect advice tendered by the latter to the Greek Government.

Thus, the *Giornale d'Italia* publishes a message from Belgrade saying that, according to the view prevalent in Yugoslav circles, as Italy does not intend to use the weight of her military power in order to bring pressure to bear on the decisions of Greece, there is still hope that the Athens Government will recognize Italy's moderation and put an end to their ambiguous attitude. According to the *Vreme*, the statement goes on to say, Greece is not pursuing a neutral policy, for the form of her co-operation with England has now been revealed, and it therefore rests with Greece to take the initiative of making a *démarche* in Rome in order to make her position clear. It is added, again on the authority of the *Vreme*, that Italy so far has avoided putting her claims forward officially in order to make it easier for Greece to face the solution of the problem.

August 24

This morning the Press repeat the charges made by the *Tomori* about the murder of Taka, while this afternoon there appears a summary of later news, again from the same source, about the beating and maltreatment of the Albanian inhabitants of the village of Kosti (?) and other places in Tsamuria.

At the same time the *Giornale d'Italia* publishes, in the form of a

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message from a correspondent at San Sebastian, a statement to the effect that during the last 48 hours England has been spreading alarmist rumours about Greco-Italian relations, saying that these are reaching breaking point, and inventing all kinds of gross falsehoods in order to find an opportunity of confirming her guarantee to Greece. But what kind of help could England give Greece when she was not even able to defend Somaliland? Obviously, adds the writer, all that the guarantee given to Greece means, as far as England is concerned, is the opportunity to make use of the Greek bases should Greece not discern the trap and so fall a victim to British propaganda.

The campaign stops at this point for the time being. It has ceased as suddenly as it began.

J. POLITIS

No. 141

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

August 31, 1940

In to-day's issue of the *Giornale d'Italia* Signor Gayda, who is considered above all to voice the opinions of the Italian Prime Minister, resumes his polemics against our country in the following article:

"While, pending the solution of the problem of the relations between Italy, Albania and Greece, the voices of protest in the Italian Press, which were aroused by the recent events in Tsamuria, are tending to subside, the irritation of the Greek Press continues to be inflamed. Indeed, it often takes literary forms, and resorts to heroic and rhetorical embellishments, whereas, in view of the seriousness of the present political situation and the reality of certain events and open problems, it ought to limit itself to less ridiculous expressions.

"We see the Academician, Spyros Melas, from the columns of the *Hestia* brandishing not only his sword but even the spear of Athena come down from the Parthenon to defend the alleged rights of the Greek People. Greece—he maintains—has upheld the torch of clear thinking, serenity, poise and measure for three thousand years, and therefore Athens would to-day be ready to defend herself not only with the spear of Athena, but also with the most dramatic holocausts.

"From the columns of the *Kathimerini* a certain Fortunio, whose identity is not more precisely stated, assures the world that all the Greeks endorse the opinion of their leader—what this opinion may be we still do not know—and that they would not hesitate to offer themselves up if need should arise.

"The *Typos* goes further; moving amid an atmosphere of heroic legend, it recalls the deeds of Leonidas at Thermopylæ and the victories of the Greeks against the vast host of the Persians, in order to draw the conclusion that the Greek nation is more than united and has never submitted since its first appearance in history.

"These Greek papers obviously exaggerate. We understand the polemical spirit which so richly inspires them, but we do not so readily understand their effort to throw themselves without reserve into an atmosphere of complete unreality verging on the ridiculous.

"Let them put aside literary and heroic reminiscences and remain within the domain of facts. If Greece really holds in her hands the torch

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of serenity and poise, let her carry it first to the Albanian territories which have remained under her sovereignty, so as to throw light on the dangerous and unbearable conditions which she has there created.

"But if she wishes, not without doing some violence to historical truth, to proclaim her invincibility from the day of her appearance in the world, we must remind her that Roman leaders have more than once obliged her to yield.

"And, if she wishes in 1940 to revive the glorious memory of Thermopylæ and its spears, we must again remind her that to-day war is waged and won with tanks, aircraft and heavy guns.

"From these polemics, which serve no useful purpose, there should not be absent that poise and measure of which Greece boasts that she has been the guardian for the past three thousand years."

J. POLITIS

No. 142

Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes" published on September 5, 1940

The Albanian paper *Tomori*, continuing its campaign of misrepresentation, has invented a new charge, this time directed against the Right Reverend the Metropolitan of Jannina. It accuses the latter of having issued instructions to the Bishops of Epirus telling them to organize bands of irregulars. We are authorized to publish a most categorical denial of this fantastic accusation against the revered person of a Prelate whose whole activities are confined to the accomplishment of his spiritual mission.

No. 143

The Italian Legation in Athens to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 7, 1940

By a Note of July 31 last the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs was kind enough to draw the attention of the Royal Italian Legation to the fact that, on the previous day, an Italian plane coming from the direction of the Dodecanese flew over the Gulf of Corinth and dropped four bombs on the destroyers of the Royal Hellenic Navy, *King George* and *Queen Olga*, as well as on two submarines lying at anchor in the Bay of Naupaktos.

In reply, the Royal Italian Legation has the honour to inform the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs that the enquiry held by the Italian authorities has established the impossibility of any attack having been made by Italian aircraft on units of the Royal Hellenic Navy on the day of July 30 last.

No. 144

The Vice-Consul at Valona to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 9, 1940

Attempts, which started a month ago, are being made here to raise bands of irregulars with the object of carrying out acts of terrorism in Greek territory.

Last week agents visited the Moslem villages of Kanina, Tsakrati

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and Doukates, in the Valona district, and tried to recruit volunteers by promising them a monthly wage of 140 francs. According to my information, not a single man came forward to enlist.

GEORGIADES

No. 145

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 11, 1940

Nearly all the Italian papers to-day publish the following telegram received by the Agence Stefani from Athens:

"In the Greek press there has been a curious outburst of hysteria which, although nominally patriotic, is definitely pro-British in tone, as was very noticeable during the last few days in connection with the subscription organized in favour of the fund for building a new light cruiser to replace the *Helle*.

"The *Hestia*, whose comments have on several occasions been marked by a spirit of exaggeration hardly in keeping with the political realities of the moment, addresses to its readers, on the occasion of the new midshipmen of the Royal Navy taking the oath, a pseudo-patriotic appeal which is distinctly provocative in character. The paper in question, after first exalting the traditions of the Hellenic Navy, goes on to say that the whole of the Greek nation wishes the newly-gazetted officers success in upholding the good name of the Greek seaman and in proving themselves worthy of the country's noble naval traditions, which, starting with the Argonauts and continued by Themistocles at Salamis, led up to Countouriotis and Cape Helles."

It is indeed a matter for surprise that the author of the above telegram to the Agence Stefani should grudge Greece the right to exhort her officers to "uphold the good name of the Greek seaman" and should regard the mere mention of the battles of Salamis and Cape Helles as a provocation directed against Italy.

J. POLITIS

No. 146

The Naval General Staff to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 14, 1940

We have the honour to inform you that the chemical analysis and metallurgic test to which the two fragments of the bombs dropped on our ships at Naupaktos on July 30 have been subjected at the chemical laboratory of the Royal Arsenal have proved the following:

Both the fragments analysed belong to the same bomb and are of the same origin as the bombs dropped on the destroyer *Hydra* on July 12.*

VICE-ADMIRAL SAKELLARIOU

No. 147

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 14, 1940

During the course of a conversation on the question of commercial transport which I had to-day with the Director of the Secretariat of the

* See document No. 94.

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Minister for Foreign Affairs, the latter found means to stress the promptness with which Count Ciano took up the matter when he saw from my memorandum how the matter stood.

"This is quite natural," said Signor Anfuso, "seeing that we have no reason to displease the Greek people with whom we have no quarrel. If we complain, it is because we notice in the policy of the Greek Government a persistence in pro-British dispositions. Please observe," he hastened to add when he noticed my movement of displeasure, "that at this moment I am expressing my personal thoughts: we are no longer talking in our official capacities, but as private persons. I am not going to formulate specific complaints, but there are various indications which lead to my conclusion. I observe," he continued, "from the cables sent by the Press Bureau of our Legation, that the Greek Press is taking up an attitude which is not friendly to Italy. There is an anti-Italian note in certain journalistic manifestations."

I told Signor Anfuso that, as had already been frequently explained both in Athens and here, the Government and public opinion were inspired by one and the same persistent desire and care—to keep the country out of the conflict between the Great Powers. That, in short, was our policy, and in order to apply it there was no other road but the honourable neutrality to which the whole country was attached. "I am sincerely grieved," I said, "if in spite of all our efforts to persuade you in regard to matters which are in themselves sufficiently evident, you still retain erroneous impressions. I have, however," I added, "one request to make of you: in examining questions of detail do not overlook one very important factor—that of our geographical position—which plays a capital part in certain cases. In overlooking this you make an initial mistake from which, as a natural consequence, false deductions follow."

"Yes, I do not deny the importance of the matter," observed Signor Anfuso condescendingly.

"As regards the Press," I continued, "I have seen that a cable of the Agence Stefani treats as an act of provocation the exhortation made to the new officers of the Navy, when taking their oath, to uphold the good name of the Greek seaman. Another message considers as provocative the contributions made on behalf of the Greek Air Force on the occasion of the sinking of the cruiser *Helle*, and the mention of historical events of which the Greek nation is proud. I must admit that I cannot see what basis there is for this idea of provocation, and, as you are giving me the pleasure of this friendly exchange of views, let me remind you how, under this head, things developed from the beginning.

"A few weeks ago the Albanian Press published any number of insulting articles about the Greek people."

"Yes," observed Signor Anfuso, "but these were about local matters."

"The Italian Press," I continued, "hastened to reproduce these articles with avidity and, indeed, satisfaction, if I am to judge by the headlines and certain comments accompanying the articles so reproduced. I need hardly tell you, by the way, that this did not give Greek public opinion an impression of friendliness on the part of the Italian nation. However, the Greek press considered it more dignified not to react to the lack of courtesy on the part of the Albanian press. And now the Italian press, which so lightly has given hospitality and encouragement

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in its columns to these innumerable Albanian provocations against Greece, wishes to consider itself in turn provoked because Themistocles or Miltiades is praised, because the Greeks would like to see a lost vessel replaced or to strengthen their Air Force, and because our sailors are exhorted to be good seamen."

"Perhaps," observed Signor Anfuso, "these publications have little significance in themselves, but they assume a certain importance when taken in conjunction with the favour shown to British propaganda."

"My personal impression," I said, "is that the Greek press reproduces the publications of all the belligerents in a spirit of complete equality and objectivity."

J. POLITIS

No. 148

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 18, 1940

I am informed that the Ambassador of a foreign Power, who is going on leave the day after to-morrow, called upon Count Ciano and, among other questions, enquired about the state of Greco-Italian relations.

"They are none too good," was the Minister's reply.

In answer to his visitor's question as to whether he was referring to the Albanian incident, Count Ciano retorted:

"That is a purely local question. But there is also the question of the assistance afforded to the British in Greek waters."

"I think," the Ambassador remarked, "that your information is not quite accurate, and you had better try and check it. Your suspicions go counter to all logic. It is difficult to admit that Greece, who ever since the outbreak of war has observed an unimpeachable neutrality, would choose the present moment of all others in order to deviate from her line of policy. Moreover, the British possess so many bases in the Eastern Mediterranean and have such a sufficiency of supplies and other means, that there is no need for them to look round for others. Try and check your information," the Ambassador said once more.

At the end of the interview Count Ciano spontaneously told his visitor that Italy was not contemplating any action against Greece.

No. 149

The Vice-Consul at Argyrocastro to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 18, 1940

Two days ago a new radio station was inaugurated here. It broadcasts, on a medium wave-length of 216 metres, a programme of Greek music, a news bulletin, and propaganda in Greek. The latter is addressed to the Greek people, and attacks H.M. the King and the Greek Government. The broadcasting hour is 8 p.m. daily.

NICOLARÉÏZIS

No. 150

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 20, 1940

One of the themes which were the subject of the Italian campaign against us last month—the accusation of Anglo-Greek collaboration—

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is being continued on a limited scale. The other theme, that of the justice due to Albania, seems to have entered upon a period of truce.

To a certain extent we may be grateful to the notorious Hodja for having revealed to us, clearly, crudely and precisely, that which up to the present we only dimly apprehended—namely, Italian designs against us. However strange it may seem at first sight, the danger to us arising out of these designs has become intensified owing to the fact that Italy has emerged from the incident of the Albanian bandit with her prestige considerably impaired.

It is no exaggeration to say that the way the Hodja drama was staged has provoked ridicule in all quarters where it has not aroused profound indignation. "Frivolous" and "clumsy" are the mildest of the epithets which I have heard applied to the technical presentation of the case. There is also the perfidious act, known to all, which has roused the conscience of the world, and has rightly or wrongly been universally attributed to an Italian hand. These and other blows, great and small, have been sustained by Italian prestige as the result of the Hodja incident. The Fascist régime will never forgive either itself or others for these failures, and at the first opportunity will seek its revenge. To the initial hostility of Italy is now added her resentment at her loss of prestige.

I mentioned above that the Albanian question had entered upon a period of truce. Actually, the new formula employed is that it is a "local" question. These were the words used by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Ambassadors of certain foreign Powers, the same phrase was repeated to me by Signor Anfuso during our recent conversation, and something similar was mumbled by the Head of the Albanian Department to the Counsellor of the Royal Legation.

Further explanations are not given, but what is meant is clear. A Greco-Albanian question has been created. The claim has now been registered: its immediate liquidation is, however, impeded for certain definite reasons. A Greco-Italian question could not be allowed to remain in suspense, but as a Greco-Albanian question it can wait for its solution. Its turn will come. In the meantime the flame is kept fizzling at the end of the other fuse—I mean, the charge of friendship towards England. And so the question remains: Is there any danger?

On this matter I have already stated my opinion on general lines, and maintain it now. One thing is certain: we are witnessing a most important turn in the evolution of the war, and very soon—perhaps within a few weeks only—we shall either find ourselves faced by very grave problems or else we shall find the political situation considerably eased as regards ourselves.

J. POLITIS

No. 151

Note handed by the Italian Minister to the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

September 23, 1940

With reference to the memorandum, in which the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs was kind enough to draw the attention of the Italian Legation to the flight of Italian aircraft over Greek territory, the latter

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has the honour to inform the Royal Ministry that precise instructions have been issued to all Italian pilots to be careful to avoid flying over Greek territory.

No. 152

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 24, 1940

I am informed from a good source that in answer to the Italian suggestions for a liquidation of the other outstanding Balkan problems, including the Albanian question and that of British influence in Greece, Germany has opposed a formal request that nothing should be undertaken which might be liable to involve military complications. From this it must be inferred that Germany cannot oppose any efforts on the part of Italy to obtain her claims by diplomatic means, and that the Reich may even be under an obligation to support these up to a certain degree. The threatening hints dropped by the Press, in the opinion of my informant, are intended to frighten us.

J. Politis

No. 153

Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes"

September 28, 1940

The Agence Stefani has reproduced yet another chapter from the Albanian paper *Tomori's* fantastic serial story about imaginary crimes perpetrated against the Moslems in Epirus. We are in a position to supply the following explanations concerning "three murders" of the *Tomori's* own invention. The first "victim," Madjar Redjep, from the village of Chlobotsari, is an entirely fictitious personage. No murder has been committed in the above village since 1927, in which year a Moslem was killed by another Moslem as the result of a quarrel over money matters. The second "victim," Riza Kali of Paramythia, is a real person, but enjoys perfect health. The third "victim," a woman (*sic*) called Djemal Hodja, from the village of Karvounari, is also a fictitious personage, no murder having been committed in the above-named village since 1932, when a Moslem killed his wife for being unfaithful to him. It should be added that a certain Djemal Hodja (a man) was living in this village down to the year 1903. He died from natural causes in 1909.

No. 154

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 28, 1940

In September's number of the monthly political review *Espansione del Impero* there appears an article, in the form of a warning, about the influence that the neutral countries in the Mediterranean could eventually have on the future course of the war.

The writer is of the opinion that among the neutrals Greece and Spain are the ones who, on account of their geographical position, could exert the most considerable influence on the military operations in the Mediterranean, were they to enter the war.

The great strategic importance of the Greek coasts and islands is

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explained at length. There follows a most detailed description of the terrible menace that Corfu, the Peloponnese, Cephalonia, Crete and Navarino would be for Italy, should they happen to be in British hands. In accordance with the sagacious policy of the Foreign Office, says the writer, Greece, whose aggrandisement after the wars of 1914–1918 was both unexpected and unmerited, was intended to serve in peace time as a counterweight to Italian influence and power in the Near East, and, in the event of war in the Mediterranean, to provide bases for the British Mediterranean Fleet.

That is why the British have always secretly encouraged the foolish Greek claims to the islands of the Dodecanese and have never ceased egging on Greece in her policy of hostility towards Italy.

The writer concludes his article with the forecast that Italy will be forced, as a precautionary measure, to occupy certain points of strategic importance in Greece. These are his words:

"It is not possible for Italy to tolerate the use of the Greek bases by the British Fleet. Were this to happen, or even in order to prevent its happening, Italy would act with lightning speed, without there being any need for her to waste a few torpedoes on one of the harmless old ships of the Greek Navy."

J. POLITIS

155

The British Minister in Athens to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

September 30, 1940

I have just been informed that two British planes, each with a crew of two, landed yesterday at 5 p.m. close to Sitia (Crete). One of the two planes was severely damaged, but the other came down because it had run short of petrol. Could you make an exception to the regulations (as was done in the case of the Italian plane which left for Rhodes) and allow our plane to proceed too?

PALAIRET

No. 156

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the British Minister

September 30, 1940

In answer to your letter of to-day's date with reference to the forced landing of two British planes at Sitia (Crete), I hasten to inform you that I deeply regret being unable to allow the departure of the one that came down owing to shortage of petrol.

The departure of this plane would be a breach of our neutrality, and, given the difficult times we are passing through, might be the cause of very serious complications, which both Greece and Great Britain have the greatest interest in avoiding.

With regard to the Italian plane mentioned in your letter, I wish to make it clear that it was not a military but a commercial plane belonging to the "Ala Littoria" Company. Moreover, this plane was forced to land owing to damage to one of the engines, which was repaired by its own crew belonging to the staff of the Company.

METAXAS.

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No. 157

The Minister in Rome to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

September 30, 1940

I was informed to-day from a very good source that the Italian Minister in Athens will be instructed to put forward certain demands. I was told at the same time that it would be wise to try to arrive at a compromise, as it is intended to impose these demands upon us by force.

I consider it quite likely that Italy really intends to take such a step at Athens and that the above information is in the nature of a feeler or a preliminary attempt at intimidation. This being so, I told my informant that, in my opinion, the Royal Government were in no way disposed to make any deviation from their policy of loyal neutrality the subject of bargaining.

J. POLITIS

No. 158

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

1st October, 1940

The answer you gave your informant was quite correct. Please follow the matter carefully and cable all details.

METAXAS

No. 159

The Consul-General at Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

1st October, 1940

The arrest of inhabitants of Greek origin, the visit to Tepeleni and Argyrocastro of the King's Delegate, the movements of troops to the South of Korytsa, and the continued concentration of Italian forces on our frontier on the eve of winter are proofs that something serious is going to happen.

ARGYROPOULOS

No. 160

Memorandum handed to the Italian Minister in Athens by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

October 3, 1940

By its Memorandum of September 23 last, the Royal Italian Legation was kind enough to inform the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs that all Italian airmen had received strict instructions that they must carefully avoid flying over Greek territory.

Notwithstanding the above friendly communication, there have been repeated cases of Italian planes flying over prohibited areas in Greek territory. The following detailed cases are reported:

1. On September 23, at 2.15 p.m., an Italian bomber flew at an altitude of 2,000 metres over the defence-zone on the southern side of the island of Ægina.

2. On September 23, at 2 p.m., an Italian bomber flew over Xilocastron in the region of Corinth.

3. On September 24, at 8.45 a.m., an Italian commercial plane bearing

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the national mark ITITO flew over the fortified island of Flevés at an altitude of 600 metres.

4. On September 27, at 2.50 p.m., a plane of the "Ala Littoria" bearing the national mark ITITO flew over the fortified island of Flevés at a low altitude.

5. On September 5, at 7.20 a.m., an Italian plane at a height of 1,000 metres flew over the defences on the S. and N. sides of the island of Ægina.

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs would greatly appreciate if the Royal Italian Legation would bring the above instances to the notice of the proper authorities.

No. 161

The Vice-Consul at Argyrocastro to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 4, 1940

The recruiting of bands of irregulars for the purpose of committing outrages on Greek territory continues. These efforts are particularly active in the districts of Tepeleni and Kurvelesi. Recruits receive an advance of 300 Albanian francs on enlistment and 100 francs a month salary; their families are also provided for.

NICOLARÉÏZIS

No. 162

Memorandum handed to the Italian Minister in Athens by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

October 8, 1940

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the honour to bring the following to the notice of the Royal Italian Legation:

1. On October 3, at 2.30 p.m., an Italian plane flew over Calloni Bay in the island of Mytilene.

2. On October 3, from 8.55 to 10 a.m., an Italian plane coming from the direction of the Dodecanese and going towards Italy flew over Greek territory the whole way from Amorgos to Zante.

3. On October 3, from 11.44 a.m. to 12.44 p.m., an Italian plane flew over the island of Eubœa, from Mantoudi as far as Orei.

4. On October 5, from 10.10 a.m. to 12.05 p.m., an Italian plane carried out a reconnaissance flight over the island of Eubœa.

5. On October 5, from 9.35 to 11.32 a.m., an Italian plane coming from the direction of the Dodecanese and going towards Italy flew over Greek territory from the island of Amorgos as far as Zante, passing over Leonidion, Zacharo, Pyrgos and Katakolon.

6. On October 5, from 1.45 to 3.30 p.m., an Italian plane coming from Italy and going towards the Dodecanese flew over Greek territory from the island of Corfu as far as the island of Amorgos, passing over Agrinion, Galaxidion, Corinth, and the island of Ægina. The same plane also flew over the prohibited area on the S. side of Ægina.

7. On October 6, at 10.10 a.m., an Italian plane flew over the port of Heraklion (Candia) in Crete, circling round at an altitude of about 200 metres.

8. On October 6, from 9.07 to 11.20 a.m., an Italian plane coming from the Dodecanese and going towards Italy flew over Greek territory from

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the island of Amorgos as far as Corfu, by way of Ægina, Corinth, Diacofto and Rion. The same plane also flew over the prohibited zone on the S. side of Ægina at an altitude of about 3,000 metres.

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs would greatly appreciate if the Royal Italian Legation would kindly draw the attention of the competent authorities to these repeated flights of Italian planes over Greek territory, notwithstanding the instructions mentioned in the Memorandum of the Royal Italian Legation of September 23 last.

No. 163

The Minister in Budapest to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 13, 1940

I am informed from a very reliable source that in the circles of the Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs an Italian attack on Greece is regarded as imminent.

SKEFERIS

No. 164

Memorandum handed to the Italian Minister in Athens by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

October 14, 1940

With further reference to its Memoranda dated October 3 and 8, the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the honour to bring to the notice of the Royal Italian Legation the following:

1. On the 9th inst., at 2.57 a.m., an Italian plane circled above the town of Heraclion (Candia) in the island of Crete.

2. On the 9th inst., from 10.38 a.m. to 2.32 p.m., an Italian plane coming from Italy and going towards the Dodecanese flew over Greek territory, passing over Lechaina, Gastouni, Amalias and Astros.

3. On the 11th inst., from 11 a.m. to 12.54 p.m., an Italian plane coming from the Dodecanese and going in the direction of Italy, flew over Greek territory from Amorgos to Cephalonia, passing over Nauplia, Nemea, Ægion and Araxos.

4. On the 11th inst., from 12.26 to 1.20 p.m., an Italian plane coming from the Dodecanese and going towards Italy flew over Greek territory, passing over Ponticonisi, Philippiada, Manoliassa and Igoumenitsa.

5. On the 12th inst., from 9.35 to 9.55 a.m., an Italian plane circled over the region of the Naval Arsenal and the islet of Psittalia. The same plane flew over the prohibited zone on the N. side of Ægina.

The Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs would greatly appreciate if the Royal Italian Legation would again call the attention of the proper authorities to these fresh flights over Greek territory, notwithstanding the instructions mentioned in the Memorandum of the Royal Italian Legation dated September 23, 1940.

No. 165

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 15, 1940

For three weeks past the question of Italian aggression against us has been following the same course as that of the Corfu question in April last.

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In every circle and in all classes of society there is not a person but has heard and passed on the information that the taking of action against us is a matter of hours. As regards the nature of the action, rumours cover the entire scale from an amicable formulation of claims to a sudden invasion. Such warnings have been conveyed to the Legation by persons with access to military and administrative circles. It is to be noted that their warnings are identical in form and argument, and that they are sometimes followed by the suggestive question whether it would not be preferable for us to negotiate on the basis of certain concessions, supposedly painless to us but of strategic necessity to Italy.

J. POLITIS

No. 166

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 21, 1940

The well-known weekly review *Relazioni Internazionali*, in its number of October 19, surveys the progress of the war and prints the following remarks:

"Italian influence in the Balkans and the Mediterranean countries has considerably increased and is to-day firmly rooted. This influence is destined to undergo yet further developments. In view of strategic necessities, its progress can no longer be arrested. This war is being waged by the Italian People for the attainment of its natural aspirations. The Italian People's policy also aims at taking the natural precautionary measures. It is, therefore, obvious that wherever in the Balkans there is still some dark spot, that spot must be cleared up without hesitation, and this will be done with the utmost vigour. Great Britain has asked for totalitarian war—war unlimited and unrestricted. The Italian People, whose whole existence is at stake, have no choice left to them but to anticipate the enemy along the path selected by the latter. Hesitation of any sort is unjustified, delay criminal. To-day force and only force must prevail in Europe . . ."

J. POLITIS

No. 167

The Vice-Consul at Santi Quaranta to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 21, 1940

The military forces in the Santi Quaranta district have been moved forward to the frontier.

TRIANTAPHYLLACOS

No. 168

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 23, 1940

Rumours of an imminent attack against us continue. Information from a military source now fixes the date at which the action against Greece will start between the 25th and 28th inst.

J. POLITIS

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No. 169

The Minister in Berne to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 25, 1940

According to information from Berlin, the attack on Greece is a matter of days.

PSAROUDAS

No. 170

The Consul-General at Tirana to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 25, 1940

The information about the requisition of vehicles is confirmed. Civilian traffic between town and town is subject to great difficulties. Telegraphic communication is also very difficult. Great activity is observable at Italian Headquarters here, the officers having left for Argyrokastro. The opinion is general that we are on the eve of an Italian move.

ARGYROPOULOS

No. 171

The Minister in Rome to the Royal Ministry for Foreign Affairs

October 26, 1940

The Air Ministry yesterday ordered the suspension of the air-service between Athens and Rome till further notice. I have not been able to obtain precise explanations of the reason for this measure.

A passenger who arrived from Rhodes by the last plane said that the plane did not stop at Athens because, according to the explanation given by the pilot, relations between Greece and Italy had reached a critical stage.

J' POLITIS

No. 172

Communiqué of the "Agence Stefani"

October 26, 1940

Armed Greek bands this morning attacked with guns and hand-grenades the Albanian frontier-posts near Korytsa, South of the Capestitsa Pass. An immediate counter-attack by an Albanian patrol, followed by the intervention of other detachments, resulted in the instant repulse of the enemy band which had penetrated into Albanian territory. Six Greeks belonging to the raiders were captured. The losses among the Albanians amounted to two soldiers killed and three wounded.

No. 173

Communiqué of the "Agence Stefani"

October 26, 1940

Yesterday evening three bombs exploded close to the headquarters of the Italian Harbour-master at Porto Edda (Santi Quaranta). Two persons were slightly wounded. The authorities are making an active search for the perpetrators of the outrage, who are either Greek or British agents.

No. 174

Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes"

October 27, 1940

Telegrams from Tirana, transmitted from Rome and through the Agence Stefani, stating that a Greek band had penetrated into Albanian

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territory and attacked the Albanian frontier-posts near Korytsa, South of the Kapestitsa Pass, are entirely false. Not a single Greek band has crossed the Albanian frontier at any point. It is well known that no band of any kind has ever been formed on Greek territory. Any such thing would be impossible, as, thanks to the measures of the Greek civil and military authorities, law and order are securely maintained.

The further announcement made by Rome through the Agence Stefani that, according to information received from Tirana, a bomb had exploded near the Harbour-master's office at Porto Edda (Santi Quaranta) and that outrages of this kind may be put down to Greek agents acting on the instigation of the Greek authorities, is looked upon here as a childish subterfuge. We do not know what exactly may have happened at Santi Quaranta, but in any case no Greeks could have had anything to do with such an act.

The Greek military authorities on the frontier, when questioned from Athens after the receipt of the telegrams from Tirana, replied as follows:

"No incident of any kind has occurred on the Albanian frontier except that, during the night of Friday to Saturday (25-26 October) at 2 a.m., the Greek frontier-posts heard shots in the direction of Viglista, inside Albanian territory, at a distance of a few kilometres from the Greco-Albanian border. We repeat the assurance that on the line of the frontier itself nothing at all occurred.

The position of the Greek frontier-posts excludes all possibility of anybody crossing the frontier in either direction. There is information to the effect that bands are being formed on Albanian territory for a purpose unknown."

No. 175

Second Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes"

October 27, 1940

Following our to-day's *communiqué* referring to the incidents in Albanian territory cabled by the Agence Stefani, we are in a position to add the following details which have been communicated to us last night from a competent source:

The shots heard from the Greek frontier-posts were fired from the village of Vernik, on Albanian territory, distant 5 kilometres from Viglista and 4 kilometres from the Greek frontier.

The Greek officer in command of the neighbouring Greek frontier-post, who heard the shots, warned the Italian officer on the opposite side and, acting in accordance with the military frontier-regulations, asked for an interview with his Italian colleague in order to inform himself about the facts of the incident and come to an agreement. So far no reply had been received to the above request.

No. 176

Third Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes"

October 27, 1940 (1 a.m.)

Following this morning's *communiqué* about the Albanian frontier incidents announcing that a Greek officer had asked for a meeting with one of the Italian officers on the frontier, we are informed that this meeting will take place to-day at 4 p.m.

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No. 177

Fourth Communiqué of the "Agence d'Athènes"

October 27, 1940 (9 p.m.)

We are informed that the previously announced meeting between Italian and Greek officers on the Greco-Albanian frontier took place to-day, Sunday, at 4 p.m.

The Italians only sent a warrant-officer. The two Greek officers, one of whom was the officer commanding the sector, asked for a fresh meeting, at which the Italian commander of the corresponding sector should be present.

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PART III

ITALY'S AGGRESSION

(OCTOBER 28, 1940)—

Documents Nos. 178-183

No. 178

Ultimatum handed by the Italian Minister to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs at 3 a.m. on October 28, 1940

The Italian Government have frequently had occasion to observe that, during the present conflict, the Hellenic Government have adopted and persisted in an attitude which is not only in direct opposition to the normal peaceful and neighbourly relations between two countries but is also contrary to the definite obligations arising out of the Hellenic Government's status as a neutral.

The Italian Government have on many occasions found themselves forced to recall the Hellenic Government to a proper sense of their obligations and to protest against the systematic violation of them, a violation of the gravest kind. Thus the Hellenic Government have acquiesced in the use of their territorial waters, their coasts and their harbours by the British Fleet in the course of the naval operations; they have also connived at refuelling by the British air forces and have allowed a military intelligence service directed against Italy to be organized in the Greek Archipelago. The Hellenic Government are perfectly aware of these facts, which have been the subject of diplomatic representations on the part of Italy. Nevertheless, the Hellenic Government, though they ought to have realized the grave consequences likely to ensue from their attitude, have not only taken no steps to protect their neutrality but, on the contrary, have gone further and further in their assistance to the British military forces and their collaboration with Italy's enemies.

The Italian Government are in possession of proofs shewing that this collaboration had been foreseen and regulated by the Hellenic Government, even to the point of understandings in military, naval and air matters.

The Italian Government are referring not only to the British guarantee which Greece accepted as part of the plan of action directed against Italy's security, but also to the positive and precise obligations assumed by the Hellenic Government who undertook to place at the disposal of the Powers at war with Italy important strategic bases in Greek territory, including a number of air-bases in Thessaly and Macedonia, for the purpose of offensive action against Albanian territory.

The Italian Government find it necessary to remind the Hellenic Government of the latter's provocative attitude towards the Albanian

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nation, as shewn by the policy of terrorism to which the population of Tsamuria have been subjected and by the insistent attempts made to provoke troubles beyond the frontiers. On that account also the Italian Government have been forced, though without result, to warn the Hellenic Government of what would be the inevitable consequences of pursuing such a policy, as far as Italy was concerned.

Italy is unable to tolerate any further such conduct. Greece's neutrality from to-day has tended to become purely nominal.

The main responsibility for this state of things falls on Great Britain and her persistent endeavour to draw other countries into the war.

To the Italian Government it is patent that the policy of the Hellenic Government has tended and is tending to convert Greek territory—or at least to permit Greek territory to be converted—into a base for warlike activities directed against Italy. This was inevitably bound to lead to an armed conflict between Italy and Greece, a conflict which the Italian Government has every desire to avoid.

The Italian Government have therefore decided to demand from the Hellenic Government as a guarantee alike of the neutrality of Greece and the security of Italy, the right to occupy with her armed forces, for the duration of the present conflict with Great Britain, a number of strategic points in Greek territory. The Italian Government demand that the Hellenic Government shall not oppose any resistance to this occupation nor impede the free passage of the forces destined for this purpose. The forces in question do not come as enemies of the Greek people, nor have the Italian Government, in proceeding to this temporary occupation of certain strategic points—an occupation rendered necessary by the circumstances and of a purely defensive character—the least intention of prejudicing the sovereignty and the independence of Greece.

The Italian Government demand that the Hellenic Government instantly issue the necessary orders to the military authorities, so that the occupation may be carried out peacefully. Should the Italian forces meet with resistance, the resistance will be crushed by force of arms, and in that case the Hellenic Government will bear the responsibility for whatever may ensue.

Athens, October 28, 1940

No. 179

Circular of the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to all Royal Legations

October 28, 1940

At 3 o'clock this morning the Italian Minister handed me in person a Note in which the Italian Government accuse the Hellenic Government of having tolerated the use by the British Fleet, in the course of its naval operations, of Greek territorial waters, coasts and harbours, of having facilitated the provision of supplies to the British air forces, and also of having allowed the establishment of a military intelligence service directed against Italy in the Greek Archipelago. The Italian Government, says the Note, find themselves obliged to remind the Hellenic Government of the provocative attitude adopted towards the Albanian nation, as shewn by the policy of terrorism directed against the population of Tsamuria and by the persistent efforts to create disturbances beyond the frontier. He adds that Italy can no longer tolerate the continuance of this

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state of things; that the neutrality of Greece has become more and more of a pure fiction. The Italian Government have therefore decided to demand from the Hellenic Government, as a guarantee of the neutrality of Greece and the security of Italy, the right to occupy with their military forces, for the duration of the present conflict with Great Britain, certain strategic points in Greek territory. The Italian Government demand that the Hellenic Government shall not oppose this occupation nor hinder the free passage of the forces detailed to carry it out. The Italian Government request the Hellenic Government to issue at once to the military authorities the necessary orders, so that the occupation in question may be effected peaceably, and adds that, should the Italian forces meet with resistance, such resistance will be crushed by force and that the Hellenic Government will bear the responsibility for any consequences that may ensue.

In handing me the above communication the Italian Minister added verbally that the Italian forces would start advancing into Greek territory at 6 a.m.

I replied to the Italian Minister that I regarded the contents of this Note and the form of an ultimatum in which it was put as amounting to a declaration of war on the part of Italy against Greece.

I add for your information that Greece will resist the Italian invasion with all her forces.

METAXAS

No. 180

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Rome

October 28, 1940

The delivery of a Note by the Italian Minister this morning demanding a free passage into Greek territory and the occupation of certain strategic points under the threat of force, followed immediately by the Italian army's aggression against Greek territory, and to-day's repeated air-attacks against towns and military bases have created a state of war which has been deliberately provoked by Italy. Greece has not sought this war and has done everything in her power to avoid it.

I am compelled by these events to request you, after communicating the above to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to ask for your passports.

We are asking the Swiss Government to assume the protection of Greek interests.

Please make the necessary arrangements for your departure as well as for that of the Consuls under your jurisdiction without awaiting the reply of the Swiss Government. If necessary, the Chief Archivist should be left in charge of the Archives.

METAXAS

No. 181

Proclamation of the Prime Minister to the Greek People

October 28, 1940

The moment has come for us to fight for the independence, the integrity and the honour of Greece. Although we have observed the strictest neutrality, with absolute impartiality towards all, Italy, denying to us the right to live the life of free Hellenes, demanded from me at 3 o'clock this morning the surrender of portions of the national territory, to be chosen

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by herself, and informed me that her troops would move forward at 6 a.m. in order to take possession. I replied to the Italian Minister that I considered both the demand itself and the manner of its delivery as a declaration of war on the part of Italy against Greece.

It is now for us to shew whether we are indeed worthy of our ancestors and of the freedom won for us by our forefathers. Let the entire Nation rise as one man. Fight for your Country, your wives, your children, and our sacred traditions.

Νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών*

IOANNIS METAXAS

No. 182

Proclamation of His Majesty the King to the Greek People

The Prime Minister a short while ago announced to you the circumstances which have compelled us to resort to war in reply to Italy's threat to suppress Greece's independence.

At this solemn moment I feel sure that every Greek man and woman will do their duty to the last and will shew themselves worthy of our glorious past.

With faith in God and in the Destiny of the Race, the Nation, united and disciplined as one man, will fight in defence of hearth and home until final victory.

Given at the Palace of Athens, October 28, 1940.

GEORGE II

No. 183

First War Communiqué of the General Staff

October 28, 1940

Since 5.30 this morning Italian military forces have been attacking our advanced units on the Greco-Albanian frontier.

Our forces are defending the national soil.

* The struggle for all has begun.

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APPENDIX

During the retreat of the Italian forces from Greek territory, there fell into the hands of the Greek High Command a large number of documents issued by the Italian Military Authorities, proving that the sudden attack upon Greece had been premeditated a long time back.

Among these documents there is an Order of the Day addressed to the troops by the General Commanding the Ferrara Division, as reproduced below:

COMMAND OF THE 28rd MOUNTAIN INFANTRY DIVISION "FERRARA"

Staff Office

P.M. 52-A, October 26, 1940/XVIII

TO THE "FERRARA"

It is now nineteen months since we have been tempering our weapons and our hearts in this well-defended and rugged country of Albania, straining towards the goal which is now in sight.

With wills and energies bound together tightly in one,* infantry, blackshirts, gunners, engineers, all, Italians and Albanians, let us turn our eyes towards Epirus.

We shall make the laurels of the "FERRARA" green once more.

Confident of this, I raise for you the war-cry of the battle that shall be Victory:

"Our Day is come . . . We must conquer."

L. ZANNINI,
Maj.-General, Commander

* *Stretti in un fascio sola*—a reference to the Fascist emblem.

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